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COMMONWEAL

FALL BOOKS

Alice McDermott
ON 'KAATERSKILL FALLS'

Daria Donnelly
ON HELEN VENDLER

Frank McConnell
ON BLOOM'S 'SHAKESPEARE'

Alan Wolfe
ON 'THE STORY OF AMERICAN FREEDOM'

Sara Maitland
ON 'THE WORD ACCORDING TO EVE'

Daniel Murtaugh
ON 'MASTER GEORGIE'

Robert Schmuhl
ON THE MEDIA

John Buell
ON A LIVING WAGE

Keith Burris on Robert Shaw

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COMMONWEAL

November 6, 1998 / Volume CXXV, Number 19

UPFRONT

Correspondence *Money, sex, war...* 4

Editorials *Small steps* 5
Back to basics 6

COLUMNISTS

An engine needs brakes
William Pfaff 7

The shaming of America
Sidney Callahan 8

SHORT TAKE

What does Tony want?
Bernard Bergonzi
England's Prime Minister Tony Blair is as compelling as he is often mystifying. 9

ARTICLE

MUSIC AS SACRAMENT
Keith C. Burris
For conductor Robert Shaw, faithfully unfolding the music is a religious act. 11

TOP OF THE NINTH 12

POETRY

The New Catechism
B.A. St. Andrews 10

THE LAST WORD

The ramp
Paul Marx 38

VERDICTS

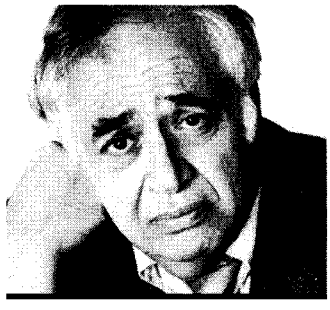
SCREEN

Affliction
Richard Alleva 14

FALL BOOKS

Kaaterskill Falls
Allegra Goodman
Alice McDermott 16

Seamus Heaney
Helen Vendler
Daria Donnelly 18



Shakespeare
Harold Bloom
Frank McConnell
In his new book, one of America's great literary critics tells us why we don't know ourselves until we know Shakespeare. 20

The Story of American Freedom
Eric Foner
Alan Wolfe 22

The Word According to Eve
Cullen Murphy
Sara Maitland 24

Master Georgie
Beryl Bainbridge
Daniel M. Murtaugh 26

Governing with the News
Timothy E. Cook
What the People Know
Richard Reeves
Robert Schmuhl 28

The Living Wage
Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce
John Buell 30

Religion booknotes
Lawrence S. Cunningham 32

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To the Editors

Bill didn't do it

Your recent editorial on Bill Clinton ["The President," September 11] was excellent, but I must take issue with the notion that we need Clinton, or any president, to "manage the economy."

Clinton is no more responsible for the recent good performance of the economy than George Bush was for the 1991–92 recession.

Ronald Reagan quadrupled the national debt by about 1986 and spooked the bond market. Ever since, bondholders have exacted strict fiscal performance standards from the government: basically, do whatever you please; just don't increase spending. The punishment for breaking the rules is a flight from treasuries and a spike in interest rates. Think of Bob Rubin as the representative of the bondholders' committee. And remember James Carville's fantasy of being reincarnated as "the bond market," the only creature in Washington, as far as he could see, that had any power.

Clinton's economic policies have been indistinguishable from Bush's because neither had any wiggle-room at all. There are many good reasons not to impeach Clinton. The notion that he or anyone else on the Washington scene is central to running the economy is not one of them.

CHARLES R. MORRIS
New York, N.Y.

An author strikes back

I was delighted that you got John McGreevy to review *The Lustre of Our Country* ["James Madison, Doctor of the Church," July 17]. It's the most perceptive review of the book I've read.

JOHN T. NOONAN, JR.
San Francisco, Calif.

From the editors: In this matter, Your Honor, you're the best judge.

An 'a' for an 'r'

Am I the only one who noticed that throughout his review of *The Truman Show* [August 14], Richard Alleve [*sic*] spelled Jim Carrey's name with one "r"?

ED CHRZANOWSKI
Lockport, N.Y.

From the editors: Apologies to Mr. Carrey from four (4) proofreaders. Note to Mr. Chrzanowski: Our film critic is not a painkiller. *Au contraire.*

What is 'gay marriage'?

Dennis O'Brien's comments on "gay marriage" ["A Parish Dismissal," September 25] too easily dismiss the position of those who believe gay marriage can be a reality and not merely a political statement. When two people stand before their family and friends and in front of the assembled people of God and proclaim their union and their intention to love and care for one another, something real is happening. These witnesses and their promise to support the couple do give "standing and authority to the utterance." The absence of civil or church recognition of the "performative utterance" between the two partners does not negate the fact that the two individuals concerned have in some way radically changed their lives.

When we recall that matrimony has been a sacrament of the Catholic church for less than half the time of its existence, and that the sacrament of matrimony is one which two individuals confer on each other, with the priest being only a witness, we are left with considerable room for continuing debate.

Finally, whether a same-sex union has any civil or church standing is important but not conclusive. Our church blesses animals, tools, ships, and a multitude of things. Why then are we so reluctant to pray for and bless two men or two women who find the love of God mirrored in each other?

ROBERT F. MIAILOVICH
Washington, D.C.

The writer is president of Dignity/USA, an organization of homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered Catholics, and their families and friends.

The writer replies:

Of course, *something* happens when any two people solemnly declare their union. As a promise of fidelity, affection, and so on, it is the very model of a performative act. If I say, "I *promise*" (assuming some simple conditions, for example, I am not acting in a play or reading out loud), then I have *done something*; that is, made a specific promise. The question is whether such promises constitute "marriage." I assume that they do not; otherwise there would not be the agitation from Dignity and others to establish "gay marriages." Lots of people these days, heterosexuals and homosexuals, apparently regard personal promise sharing as more than sufficient for establishing a union and may, in fact, disdain "marriage" as an outdated social institution. Marriage is, for better or for worse, a public *institution*, not a "private" contract.

DENNIS O'BRIEN

Imposing heroism on others

A fellow teacher once described a departmental chair whom neither of us liked as being skilled at turning other people's other cheeks—a-worse-than-dubious moral stance. When Sidney Callahan urges the use of nonviolent tactics against the likes of Mladic, Karadzic, and Saddam Hussein ["Confronting the Generals," September 25], she is adopting much the same policy.

In the one instance I know of in which nonviolence actually worked—the ending of the British Raj—Gandhi was blessed in his enemy. No matter how Machiavellian, exploitative, and oppressive British policy had been, the English people still had consciences. They could not wantonly and willfully destroy unarmed protesters, innocent civilians.

(Continued on page 36)

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 405, New York, NY, 10115. Telephone: (212) 662-4200. E-mail: commonweal@msn.com. Web: http://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Fax: (212) 662-4183. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, ME 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 475 Riverside Dr. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Commonweal, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 405, New York, NY 10115.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 1998 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $47; foreign, $50. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Aleman; p. 3, Peter C. Howard; p. 3, Jerry Bauer; pp. 7, 20, 38, Ross, Rothco; pp. 8, 24, Baloo, Rothco; p. 14, Attila Dory; p. 16, Valerry; p. 18, Giovanni Giovannetti; p. 28, Tom Gibb, Rothco; columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

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Small steps

No euphoria greeted the painstakingly arrived at agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, hammered out late last month under U.S. auspices at Wye Mills, Maryland. None of the parties involved is under any illusions about the difficulties that lie ahead or the potential consequences, should the peace process begun in Oslo five years ago break down completely. Because of the persistence of terrorist bombings against Israel and the belligerence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud government, little trust exists between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That explains the crucial and expanded role played by the United States over the last year-and-a-half. Moreover, both Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat face severe and even potentially violent opposition within their own ranks. As many observers note, the price for making peace in the Middle East, for both Israelis and Palestinians, is often violent death. In short, despite the modest nature of what Netanyahu and Arafat agreed to in what is called the Wye Memorandum, much was on the line.

News reports detailing the volatile and contentious nine-day negotiation confirm the obvious: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu committed his right-wing government to Oslo's fundamental principle of land-for-peace only after making what seemed like every effort to scuttle the process. Netanyahu's last-minute attempt at blackmail in demanding that the United States release the Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard epitomized the prime minister's overall strategy. Nevertheless, a compliant and evidently imperturbable Yasir Arafat, and a determined and resourceful American team of negotiators led by President Bill Clinton, defused Netanyahu's singular combination of bluster, political timidity, and personal ambition. King Hussein of Jordan, brought to Wye at the last moment and visibly suffering from the effects of treatment for cancer, introduced a note of eloquent and sober realism to the discussions. As a result, the Wye Memorandum, despite its more worrisome details—especially the expanded role envisioned for the Central Intelligence Agency—did achieve at least one significant breakthrough. Netanyahu, backed by his hawkish foreign minister Arik Sharon, has publicly signed on to the Oslo process. He will now have a political and personal stake in its success. And in finally committing himself to the land-for-peace principle, Netanyahu has also turned away from an important segment of his own political coalition, one that continues to believe in a so-called greater Israel and refuses to contemplate peaceful coexistence with an independent Palestinian people. Netanyahu's decision was obviously a political gamble he thinks he can win, but it was still a gamble.

In agreeing finally to fulfill the Israeli promise at Oslo to turn over another 13 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority, Netanyahu received commitments from Arafat that the Authority would (1) remove language in the PLO covenant calling for the destruction of Israel, and (2) clamp down on terrorist groups, such as Hamas, that continue to operate from Palestinian territory. Unwilling to trust Palestinian assurances, Netanyahu insisted that the CIA monitor and verify the Authority's antiterrorist efforts, and this Arafat also agreed to. (Given his own political vulnerability, to what extent Arafat can deliver on an-

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titerrorist promises is also a legitimate question.) Placing the CIA in the middle of such an inherently difficult and politically delicate situation is fraught with risks. It is, in short, almost a certain recipe for turning the United States into an object of mutual Palestinian and Israeli mistrust. It is clear, however, that guaranteeing Palestinian antiterrorist efforts was the linchpin of the agreement, and hands-on U.S. involvement had become a necessity.

In return for Palestinian cooperation, the Israelis will release more than 700 political prisoners, will guarantee safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and will permit the opening of an airport in Gaza. Most important of all, the Wye Memorandum keeps Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the path to the final-status negotiations promised in the original Oslo accords.

It is almost certain that extremists on both sides will try to sabotage the Wye agreement by resorting to terrorism or assassination. Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the leader of Hamas, was defiant: "It is an illusion to think the agreement will put an end to our military activity." Right-wing Israelis have issued only slightly more veiled warnings. It will take courage and fortitude—and yes, even some trust—on both sides if the promise of peace envisioned in Oslo is ever to come to fruition. However, the alternative to peace—the continued disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people and a bloodier Israeli occupation—is no real alternative at all. The road to liberation, for both Palestinians and Israelis, leads in only one direction and has to be walked in small steps. The Wye Memorandum was one such step.

BACK TO BASICS

Fides et ratio, the encyclical with which John Paul II marked the twentieth anniversary of his papacy, has a message for a searching, thinking, believing church and a searching, thinking, sometimes believing, sometimes doubting, sometimes despairing world. Both messages provide the kind of common ground that could unite Catholics, not in unanimity perhaps but in fruitful dialogue and initiative.

The pope's message to the world? The human heart is haunted by fundamental questions about life's meaning that cannot and should not go unaddressed. Human reason, especially when expanded and perfected by faith, is capable of revealing the deepest truths about life and human destiny.

Fides et ratio, in other words, is a frontal challenge to the cult of meaninglessness which may have legitimate roots in the bloodshed and cruelty of the twentieth century but which has often become as much the fashionable, unexamined stance of our time as sentimental optimism was of the nineteenth century.

Catholics are pretty much of one mind in rejecting this stance. They vary only in the degree of their awareness of the stark gulf that can separate them from some of their cultural peers or, if equally aware, in the particular mix of empathy, adaptation, and confrontation with which they think it best to communicate the Good News. Here, then, is common ground for fruitful dialogue among Catholic thinkers.

Making history, one issue at a time

With this issue, *Commonweal* completes 74 years of publication. Over the next year, we will be making/observing/celebrating our 75th Anniversary in various ways, some of them not yet invented. Meantime, be assured that we don't feel as old as we are.

The pope's message to the church? The philosophical dimension of theological training must be strengthened because the complicated interaction between faith and reason requires a mutually supporting relationship between theology and philosophy. In this regard, the greatest potential for "original, new, and constructive" thinking lies with efforts to build on a tradition of Christian philosophizing, relating contemporary thought to a long and living heritage.

Fides et ratio notes that such rigorous analytic and speculative thinking, rooted in a long tradition, has been overshadowed since Vatican II by the renewal of Scripture studies and interest in sociology, psychology, comparative religion, and history. The encyclical could have added that this shift was also due to the abstract, enclosed, and self-satisfied character that marred too much of this thinking in preconciliar years.

Precisely because of this memory, some Catholics may be wary of the pope's call. Nonetheless, there is a growing sense, at least in the United States, of the need for what could be termed a "re-intellectualization" of Catholicism. To be sure, there are Catholic fundamentalists (either of Scripture or Vatican decrees) as well as those whose faith and spiritual life seem organized around apparitions and special revelations. There are social activists who shrug off doctrine as inconsequential and seekers who reduce it to therapeutic and meditative practices. Between these extremes, however, a great many Catholics long for a tuning of the church's intellectual muscles, a stretching and strengthening of the sinews of belief, and a more demanding standard of discourse, whether from the pulpit, in religious education programs, from conservative and liberal protagonists, or in the pages of Catholic-inspired journals like this one.

Not that all those who share this longing would necessarily agree on exactly how the church's intellectual fitness can be achieved, or how a venerable and rich philosophical tradition can be maintained and invigorated. *Fides et ratio* stops well short of spelling out practical strategy; and, like most papal documents, it could even be read and used in authoritarian ways fatal to the very enterprise the pope urges. That would betray the encyclical's spirit and squander an opportunity for productive discussion rather than polemical squabbling.

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WILLIAM PFAFF

AN ENGINE NEEDS BRAKES

Globalism at the brink

An acute observer who was in Washington for the meeting of international financial institutions at the start of October says that he felt that he was attending a wake, a wake for globalism, where the mourners could not bring themselves to admit that death had passed their way. They were unable to think clearly because they were in denial.

Globalism's collapse had provoked in them an intellectual crisis that resembled a religious crisis. The globalist paradigm derived much of its power from its prophetic content. It proposed a universal economic explanation and program for the future. It was all the more powerful as a belief system because it defined the profits made by Western investors and traders, and the costs paid by others, as mutually indispensable elements in an ultimately benign process.

The market has many virtues but the globalist economic philosophy's attribution of a divine design to the unregulated play of the market was not a rationally defensible position. Globalism produced an abdication of Western political responsibilities for the international economy. This made no sense after those same leading capitalist countries' past experience of damage done by unregulated markets within their own financial systems.

The avowed task now is to erect a "new financial architecture" for the world economy, but no one has yet described it, as there seems to be no new Keynes to provide the blueprints. While awaiting a theoretical foundation for serious reform of the international system, the key counsels would seem to be to do no more harm, if harm can be avoided, and to make no more mistakes that derive from ideology divorced from intelligence.

A case in point is the controversy now developing about supposed pressures on the independence of the new European Central Bank. The victory of the Social Democrats in Germany has added to the array of European government leaders who are skeptical of the hard-money orthodoxy of the central bank's president, Wim Duisenberg, and of the presumed majority of the bank's council. The Social Democrats' victory is interpreted as a potential challenge to the European bank's independence and therefore to its "credibility"—a key issue where the currency markets are concerned.

Oskar Lafontaine, the Social Democratic party leader nominated to become finance minister in the German government being formed by Gerhard Schroeder, has said that there should be "a European economic government" to coordinate budget, tax, and social policies for the countries which have adopted the European currency. He has, in the past (without success), demanded from the Bundesbank a policy of lower interest rates. Both he and France's Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin have said that Europe should set an exchange-rate target for the relationship between the dollar and the new euro.

These positions all imply that political considerations should influence central bank decisions—which monetarist theory says should not occur. The monetarist position is once again the result of a theoretical conception divorced from political realism and historical experience.

The German Bundesbank itself is not independent. It had, and has, an obligation in German basic law to support the economic policy of the German government in power. The American Federal Reserve system and its chairman, Alan Greenspan, are not independent in the manner in which Mr. Duisenberg would seem to conceive that his bank should be. The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank is accountable to the Clinton administration, which nominates its members, and to the Congress.

The European Central Bank is accountable to the European governments, whatever its nominal independence, and when Mr. Lafontaine suggests that the eleven countries which have adopted the euro as their currency will eventually need some form of economic government, he is stating the obvious. The eleven have already established the so-called Euro-11 council to meet during European economic and finance minister meetings, which will informally monitor the European Bank's decisions. This is necessary, indeed indispensable.

The idea that a body composed, for the most part, of professional central bankers should independently control the fiscal policy of eleven nations is as unreasonable, and unrealistic, as that a few thousand young traders should have been allowed to rule and ruin world finances.

It has always seemed to me that the qualities which damned globalist orthodoxy were its intellectual narrowness, its lack of political sophistication, and its indifference to the ethical dimension of what it was doing to vulnerable people. Ethical claims never carry much weight in what has become the accepted opinion of a given time, and political claims are rejected by bankers as prejudicing what those bankers claim are objective decisions. But the neglect of both can be very costly in the end, as we may see by looking about us. □

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE SHAMING OF AMERICA

Embarrassment is contagious

I give in; I'm succumbing to scandal analysis. And this after my boast that I was the only writer in America who never wrote a word about O.J. Not watching TV news provides protective insulation.

But I am an omnivorous reader, and especially faithful to the *New York Times*. Thus my defenses against the Monicagate mudslide were breached. Without informed consent, I was treated to the Starr report with all its soap opera-*cum*-farce details. Wincing and flinching, I reluctantly skimmed my way in and out of it.

But skipping here and there means you miss a lot. What were all these sly jokes about cigars, I wondered? Coming upon the explanation in a magazine article, I was instantly sorry to find out. Oh no, arrgh, I felt stricken with shame and covered my eyes as though I could blot out the knowledge.

It turns out you can feel shame for others, even for people who don't know enough to feel ashamed of themselves. Shame makes you want to sink into the ground and hide. Even when the deficiencies and lapses exposed are not yours, you can feel ashamed to be a bystander. Embarrassment can be social and collective.

Guilt, on the other hand, is felt by an individual who actively commits a sin or engages in wrongdoing. Guilty persons can act to make reparation, but shame cannot be so easily corrected. While the guilty may atone, the ashamed often strike out to save face. In properly socialized persons, both shame and guilt arise from a violation of internalized standards of worth that transcend the self. Being sorry because you have been caught and painfully punished is not the same as feeling truly ashamed or truly guilty.

Many morally tone-deaf folks have flunked "Morality and Civilization 101," that crucial course in life. Monica Lewinsky may never have had a chance, coming from California and her Valley Girl world. But Bill Clinton has at least encountered religious teaching, family loyalty, and basic moral concepts of honorable behavior. He has had upright friends and contemporaries who came out of his Arkansas milieu. Are they feeling ashamed for him now?

Shameless behavior infects observers. I'll never forget walking through the red-light district in Amsterdam and seeing a scantily clad prostitute standing up for sale in her window. My sense of shame over her degradation could not be assuaged by thinking that since this is Holland, she could be a licensed "sex worker," get regular health care, and be in line for a pension. But maybe not. She was dark-skinned and, like many other prostitutes who are immigrants, she might be vulnerable to the abuses that produce so much post-traumatic stress disorder among prostitutes.

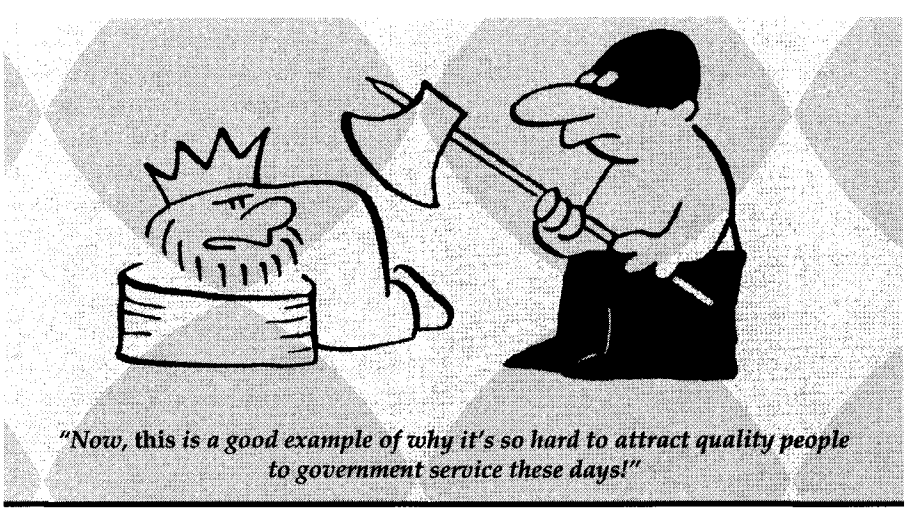
Suffering indignity and shame may be a form of trauma. The vile system of chattel slavery included the cruel exposure and public sale of human beings. All such abuses of power are morally shameful. In particular, powerful males who sexually exploit less powerful females are despicable.

Yet in Clinton's case there may be more going on than immoral abuse of power. His reckless and self-destructively obsessive behavior has all the earmarks of a sexual addiction. Most addictions emerge after repeated choices that are voluntary; slowly a habit becomes ingrained, and it becomes compulsive.

An addicted person loses much of his or her freedom, but moral resistance is always possible. When the compulsive behavior is admitted to be harmful, there is always the moral option to seek help. Washington insiders tell tales of Clinton's crude pursuit of women in public, which were clear signs of a problem. If nothing else, such risky and predatory behavior is incompatible with Clinton's high intelligence and ambition.

One of the most disturbing details in the Starr report is the account of Clinton eating, talking on the phone, and being sexually stimulated, all at the same time. This fragmented, unfocused behavior seems to be that of a person who, to put it mildly, is not operating as an integrated, self-controlled unit. Functioning parts of the self appear to be going off in different directions, with no "there there." It's a very bad sign when sexual activity gets isolated from a person's family, and from professional and religious commitments. Words and deeds become dangerously separated from one another.

If one part of Bill is not in touch with the other parts of Bill, it makes it easier



"Now, this is a good example of why it's so hard to attract quality people to government service these days!"

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to lie. The most skillful manipulators are those who, at the moment they utter falsehoods, can self-deceptively be convinced of their own story. Private sexual behavior may not always affect public professional functioning, but when a person's behavior points to inner contradictions and a lack of self-control, trouble lies ahead.

So what's to be done? Impeachment for *high* crimes doesn't seem to exactly fit the case. And unlike a judge sentencing a drunken driver to attend AA's twelve-step program, the House and Senate cannot enforce therapy. *Ad hoc* spiritual counsel for this kind of deep-seated habitual disordered behavior can hardly be effective. (Just ask those who have dealt with clerical pedophiles.) Could Humpty Dumpty be put together again with prayer and good intentions?

For the next two years we are probably condemned to limp along with a leader who would be promptly fired if he were a school superintendant. Clinton's shamelessness has already ensnared us in months and months of embarrassed shame. I don't think the country actually condones his behavior, but most people are willing to let him get away with it, if they can be spared prolonged entrapment in the shameful stink. Air pollution and moral smog are suffocating us. We're gasping for fresh air, but we're probably not going to get relief any time soon. □

Bernard Bergonzi

WHAT DOES TONY WANT?

A puzzling prime minister

I have an ingenious acquaintance who is convinced that Tony Blair's New Labour regime provides sinister parallels with the Fascist dictatorships of prewar Europe. He publishes letters in the press giving his reasons, some of which sound disconcertingly plausible; he has warned Blair's intellectual guru, the sociologist Anthony Giddens, to beware the fate of Martin Heidegger, who once supported Hitler.

It's nonsense, though. Blair is a good democrat, leader of a party which last year swept to power in one of the greatest electoral victories in British history. But power is the key word; in modern British politics a prime minister with a disciplined cabinet and a solid and docile majority in the House of Commons (docile because many of the members have hopes of preferment), backed by popular support, can get his/her way on practically anything. Eighteen months after coming into office, Blair remains extraordinarily popular in the country, as shown by opinion polls. He dominates the government, the Commons, and the Labour party, which has not yet officially changed its name to New Labour, though you might think it had if you listen to Blair and his ministers. Something similar was true of Margaret Thatcher, whom Blair admires, when she was at the peak of her popularity.

But Thatcher believed in division and exclusion, openly regarding not only the left in the nation but much of the center right as her bitter enemies; as a result, she provoked hatred as well as devotion. Blair, on the other hand, wants to include everyone in the New Labour project, such as middle-class home owners who usually vote Conservative and businessmen who always do, and is making his pitch accordingly. He knows perfectly well that a prime minister, however dictatorial his impulses, can always be removed by the voters, as happened to John Major, and occasionally by his colleagues, as happened to Margaret Thatcher. Many of Blair's political aims remain obscure but one is already very clear: to win a second full four- or five-year term of office for Labour, something which has never happened in its occasional periods in government.

I found Blair fascinating and puzzling before the election, and do even more so now that he is in office and so evidently enjoying the exercise of power. He has made many changes, not all of them agreeable, even if they are claimed to be necessary; he has turned the Labour party, once an engagingly ramshackle structure that sometimes managed to win an election, into a super-efficient machine manned by sharp-suited spin doctors and image burnishers. A columnist has

THE REVIEW OF POLITICS

Christianity and Politics: Special Issues

The Review of Politics will mark the passing of this millennium with two special issues given to essays and scholarly studies engaging in some way the relationship of Christianity and Politics. A broad interpretation of that theme is encouraged. Welcome are manuscripts that consider topics (or some aspect or instance thereof) such as Christianity and Liberalism, Catholicism and American Democracy, Christianity in Post–Modern Analysis, and thinkers such as Thomas More, John Calvin, Alexis de Tocqueville, Jacques Maritain, John Courtney Murray and Reinhold Niebuhr. Welcome are studies that bring the resources of the Christian tradition to bear on some problem of national or international politics. Welcome are studies in religion and politics in which Christianity is approached comparatively and/or in which systematic empirical research plays a role.

Communications indicating an intention to submit a manuscript are encouraged. Manuscripts will be received until April 1, 1999.

All manuscripts should be submitted in QUADRUPLICATE to *The Review of Politics*, Box B, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Further information can be found on our World Wide Web Homepage at http://www.nd.edu/~rop. Questions may be addressed to the editor at ROP.Editor.1@nd.edu.

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The New Catechism

Notice how sparrows cluster like dried raisins
in the knife-edge of North wind. As you listen

to their incantations locked in ice, risk walking
any street in any town in the richest country

in the world. Count one by one the moss-people
curled against stone warmed by a distant sun

witness how they fortify their cardboard nests
and answer truthfully: Would you worship a god

huddled there invested in the have-nots? A god
with CP? A god the color of Jordanian mud?

A queer god whose English is imperfect yet
whose heart mirrors perfectly all hearts?

A god you least expected at the High Gates
of Good Angels? A god least likely to assume

the Throne of Thorns? Would you crown again
a god like Jesus was before the priesthood

reconfigured Him in its exclusionary image?
This meditation is an ancient offering, a kiss

of consecration pure as prayers of atonement
and desire. Suffering and arrogance sleep

uneasy as two thieves beside one fire. In
caves beneath the altarstone a winter wind

is rising. The sparrow god is stirring; even
now, the god of sparrows is shifting shape.

B. A. St. Andrews

complained of the "broad streak of silliness" evident in Blair's liking for the presence of pop stars and media personalities on official occasions (though one has heard less of that lately). More worrying is his naive regard for prominent businessmen, and particularly the egregious Rupert Murdoch. He wants to keep the support of Murdoch's newspapers, which he currently has in a tenuous way, but if Britain enters the European Monetary Union (EMU), which looks likely in the end, they will turn against him.

Blair has made many things happen. Scotland and Wales have voted for devolved government, and there is a firm commitment to reforming the House of Lords and removing the hereditary element, a notorious anomaly in a modern democracy. Above all, there is the settlement in Northern Ireland, an extraordinary achievement, which I never expected to see (though its future is still precarious, hanging on the question of decommissioning weapons, which will involve the IRA in handing over a few guns, at least). Though the government is maintaining the Tories' strict fiscal policy, more money has been found for health and education, though not nearly enough, according to critics on the left and professionals in the field. Reform of the welfare system, like entry into the EMU, is going to involve Blair and his government in harder and more potentially unpopular decisions than he has so far had to make. And the difficulty will be all the greater if the tidal wave of global recession hits the economy.

Sooner or later, Blair will encounter real difficulty, of the harsh, character-building kind that he has so far been fortunate enough to avoid; I think it will be good for him. He can then expect serious criticism, which dictators can suppress but democratic politicians have to endure. He will hardly be worried by the official Conservative opposition, a demoralized and divided rump after their electoral disaster, under a youthful, balding leader, William Hague, a stopgap figure whom no one expects to see as prime minister. Blair's real opponents are all on the left, and some of them were recently voted into the party leadership, as a token warning that Blair cannot have everything his own way. Then there is the senior, respected figure of Roy Hattersley, a sometime Labour minister who is now a prolific journalist and political commentator. Hattersley represents old Labour, still an active force despite the efforts of the Blairistas, which believes that a left-wing party should aim at the redistribution of wealth and be prepared to tax and spend in order to achieve it. Farther out are the pure old-time Socialists who believe that the market economy should not be regulated, as New Labour wants, but abolished in favor of a better and fairer system. They are utopians, but the party would be poorer without any trace of a utopian vision. Even Blair seemed to hint as much in his recent impressive speech to the party conference, which was charged with communitarian rhetoric about the need to say "we" rather than "me."

In totalitarian societies there are portraits of the leader in every home. Sometimes Blair seems always to be on the television screen; but one can turn it off, which is a concrete sign of a better system. If pressed, I would say that I admire him, notwithstanding the intermittent daftness and emptiness in his pronouncements, and still give him the benefit of the doubt about his aims and ideals for the country, vague though these are. I do not, however, trust him; not for any defects of personality, but because power corrupts and it doesn't do to trust politicians. As Chesterton remarked, one must learn to love the world without trusting it. I won't actually love Blair, but I will probably vote for him again. □

Bernard Bergonzi *writes frequently for* Commonweal *from England.*

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MUSIC AS SACRAMENT

The mastery of Robert Shaw

Keith C. Burris

I am a Connecticut Yankee transplanted from the Midwest. I have never worshiped the sun, never sought the heat. But this past June I headed due and deep south on a sort of personal pilgrimage, to hear and see the world's master of choral music, Robert Shaw. At eighty-two, Shaw is not only the grand old man of American classical music, he is also one of the most adventuresome conductors working anywhere.

Shaw has been a household name for fifty years. Millions of Americans remember the Robert Shaw Chorale of the 1950s and 1960s. They heard it on tour or bought the records. Still others remember his work on the radio and with Fred Waring. But even then Shaw was leading choruses for Toscanini, teaching at Juilliard, and founding the Collegiate Chorale. An intensely serious musician, he has always sought the most noble and difficult work. Thus, at the peak of his own chorale's popularity, he went to work with the Cleveland Orchestra, running its choral program so that he could learn from the legendary George Szell. In fact, Shaw tailored his chorale's tours around the Cleveland Orchestra's schedule.

In those years, Shaw was setting a new standard for vocal music in America—while popularizing it. He had a deep and widespread impact on two generations of community, high-school, and college choral direction. Working with Alice Parker, he created the now-enshrined arrangements of American Negro spirituals and Appalachian folk songs. The Robert Shaw Chorale recorded these, along with Irish folk songs, sea chanteys, Stephen Foster tunes, and Christmas music. These became the canon of popular American choral music. And because of the popularity of the chorale, Shaw was able to introduce middle America to something else—the monumental works of choral music: the Mozart *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Passions*, etc. He brought these to high school gyms in midsize towns throughout America, alternating them with programs of spirituals and glee-club repertoire.

Shaw was the first to lead a professional performance of the Bach B Minor Mass in New York, and he made the first American recordings of it and the Brahms *German Requiem*. He toured the B Minor Mass with the chorale, which many thought was insane, but sold out the bookings even before leaving New York. And he took it to Russia for a historic performance that is said to have deeply affected the musical life of that country. Shaw was also the first in America to perform Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*—a work he has continued to champion—and he commissioned Paul Hindemith's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed."

All this is an amazing legacy, but it constitutes only part of Shaw's life in music. For what is less well documented is Shaw's work since he disbanded the chorale thirty years ago and moved to Atlanta as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Not only did he build a good regional symphony into a world-class orchestra, but he:

- Championed modern classical music;
- continued to compile an incredible list of recordings (made up, in part, of near-definitive performances of great works, along with obscure choral works that otherwise might be lost to the recording world);
- changed the musical geography of the South, lifting standards but also integrating his programming and his orchestra;
- and in recent years, pursued a second—or third—career as a musical patriarch and rabbi.

In November of last year, I scheduled a business trip around a Shaw concert with the Atlanta Symphony and Chorus. Shaw is now its music director *emeritus* and conductor *laureate*. The maestro mounted an extraordinary program: Béla Bartók's "Cantata Profana," which Shaw premiered in New York some forty years before; Samuel Barber's "Prayers of Kierkegaard"; and Ralph Vaughan Williams's "*Dona Nobis Pacem*." These are modern pieces, and all are choral, making them doubly hard sells. But the Atlanta audience did not find the program obscure, high brow, or inaccessible. Instead, three performances were virtual sellouts and the audiences roared.

Afterward, Shaw recorded the pieces for Telarc (80479), causing more than one critic to admire the vocal product *and* the conductor's nerve. Many younger conductors wouldn't dare attempt such a program, and no other conductor in America has the clout to get such pieces onto disc—and then to sell them. This year Shaw won his fourteenth Grammy. I would not be surprised if this new recording brings him a fifteenth.

My June pilgrimage was to Greenville, South Carolina, where The Robert Shaw Choral Institute has relocated from

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Top of the Ninth

In September, I attended performances of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony, Choral Fantasy, and *Missa Solemnis* at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. The National Symphony Orchestra and the Choral Arts Society of Washington presented a Beethoven festival, led by Mr. Shaw.

Although the maestro had canceled appearances during the summer for reasons of health, Shaw seemed quite fit at the Kennedy Center. Reviewing the performance, *Washington Post* critic Tim Page described Shaw as being "at the peak of his powers," and noted that "after some thirty-five years of exposure to the Ninth, I cannot remember having heard the choral finale sung so magnificently...big, booming, full-throated, eternally exultant, yet impeccably nuanced." I concur. I do not expect to hear such a performance again in my lifetime. K.C.B.

southwestern France. The institute has had a number of sponsors over the years, including Emory, Ohio State, and Boston universities. It is now sponsored by Furman University, a physically beautiful school in Greenville with an outstanding music program. If Furman sticks with Shaw, it will be known worldwide.

The institute consists of two weeks of intensive score study and preparation with Shaw, culminating in two concerts. The two programs I heard in Greenville were even more extraordinary than what I had heard in Atlanta. The first program was held at Greenville's performing arts center. The second was at the First Baptist Church. Both were followed by encores of Shaw/Parker spirituals.

The first program consisted of the Bach motet "*Singet dem Herrn*" ("Sing to the Lord a New Song"), the Mozart Mass in C Major (or "*Coronation* Mass"), and the Haydn Mass in D Minor (or "*Lord Nelson* Mass"). The second program was English, modern, and without orchestra. It consisted of the Mass in G Minor by Ralph Vaughan Williams; *Requiem*, by Herbert Howells; and four pieces by Benjamin Britten: Selections from "A.M.D.G.," from the opera *Gloriana*, and from "Sacred and Profane"; and "Rejoice in the Lamb." It was the most intimate and perhaps most deeply moving concert of classical music I have ever heard. The listener did not want to leap out of the seat and yell "Bravo!" but simply to sit (or perhaps stand) in appreciative silence.

The first concert was sublime. But it is not possible for me to convey how poignant and profoundly beautiful the second performance was. Many factors converged. It was in a smaller space—a church, not a concert hall. There were only the choir and Mr. Shaw, no horns or strings. The performance of the Howells *Requiem* was dedicated to a member of the choir who had died just two days before, after what Mr. Shaw described as "a frighteningly brief" bout with cancer. The piece itself is about the death of Howells's only son. The composer wrote it, then tucked it away for almost forty-five years. This was "the quiet music of the Holy Ghost" in a hypnotic performance. One could sense the absolute unity of the choir in total sync with its conductor. Not only was every eye on him when not on the music, but a sort of collective clock seemed to have the singers and conductor moving through the music as one unit, one spirit.

Shaw gave so utterly of himself that it was impossible not to be moved. After a two-and-a-half-hour program, the octogenarian was so exhausted that, accompanied by an aide, he simply left the hall while the audience stood waiting for him to return to take his bow. (Shaw will seldom come to the center of the stage to bow, and if pressed, will do so only once. He typically stands to the side, applauding the orchestra, soloists, and chorus, and sometimes singling out individuals for acclaim.)

Finally, at the First Baptist performance, Shaw annotated virtually every piece with his humorous, salty, deeply felt commentary, making the performance all the more personal. He was teaching the audience as well as the singers he had been instructing all week.

What *is* the famous "Shaw sound"? Precision plus spirit. After Greenville, I bought a non-Shaw recording of the Howells *Requiem*. It was very fine, but the sound was English, boyish, and sweet. When Shaw's choir sang the piece, it had been anguished, searching, and, finally, a fluid, confident prayer of consolation.

What makes "the Shaw sound"? Start with lightness and precision. Shaw knits together 160 singers to sound like 16. When he performs Bach, there is quickness yet all Bach's passion and fervor remain. There is also a singular velvety quality; an almost dancing soprano sound, never screechy or shrill; and a rich, hooty bass tone that works as a sort of Verdi-like foundation. No one gets basses to sound the way that Shaw's do. All this is accomplished according to Shaw's well-honed method: an emphasis on rhythm and on count-singing; and breaking down the music into separate tasks, so that the notes, rhythm, enunciation, dynamics, and color are all handled separately. Amazingly, in a week's rehearsal time, Shaw can get "the sound" with a choir he is guest conducting.

Another factor in creating the sound is Shaw's meticulous editing of the scores: he gives dynamic marking to virtually every note, for every voice and instrumental part. The singers never just "hang around." There is always something to do (even if it can't easily be done). Shaw builds an internal unity in the choir from its mutual com-

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mitment, effort, and technical drill.

But there still remains an *X* factor, something beyond the maestro's considerable bag of technical tricks. It has to do with Shaw's teaching style. He has the ability to imagine and then explicate the music for the musicians. With verbal finesse, he inspires them to rise to the very top of their abilities—and maybe a little above them. Voices, particularly, can be manipulated by the power of suggestion, and Shaw's suggestions are powerful. People who sing or play under him describe the process of "reaching for the music" or of "unfolding" it. Shaw gives them a road map to the heart of the composer.

Rather than playing the dictatorial conductor, Shaw approaches musicians as collaborators who must fashion the product among themselves. He does not simply hand them the music, but helps them to rediscover it.

I believe the *X* factor in the Shaw technique/sound is derived from human awe. When a Shaw chorus sings of the Crucifixion, it lays Christ in the tomb before you. When it sings of the Resurrection, it soars.

Since his retirement as music director of the Atlanta Symphony in 1988, Shaw has spent much of his time teaching in short residences at American universities, and conducting the two ambitious choral workshops that he established for teachers and conductors. One of these is the Robert Shaw Choral Workshop at Carnegie Hall. Held each January, it culminates in a Carnegie recital. The other is the institute at Furman. Through these workshops and recitals, Shaw continues to promulgate his well-honed musical principles:

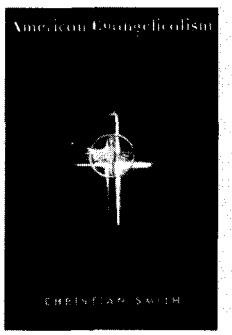
- Music should be made for love, not money. (This is one reason Shaw is so devoted to working with amateur groups.)
- A choir is a community, in fact a moral community whose activity is akin to what the discourse was for Socrates and his students. For Shaw, a choir achieves a unity generally not possible today in politics or religion: All members work for a greater good, but individuality may still flourish.
- The goal of score study and performance is to get back to the composer's original intent. Performance is not show business but an act of faithfulness.

Thus a whole cohort of music teachers and conductors has been schooled in Shaw's ideas, methods, and passion. This may constitute an even greater musical legacy than Shaw's arrangements and the folk canon of the Robert Shaw Chorale era.

Shaw is not a churchy man, but to me he seems a deeply religious one. He conducts the great sacred choral texts not as aural ornamentation, but as truth. He told Martin Goldsmith of National Public Radio that "music is a sacrament, when it's right."

Shaw's singers know that this man with sixty years of experience (ranging from work with Bruno Walter to Philip Glass), ornery wit, and magnificent humanity, can lead them to the very heart of Bach, or Brahms, or Mozart. One senses they would follow him anywhere. As would those of us who envy them. □

Fall Reading



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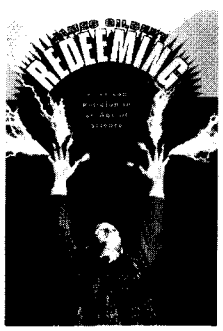

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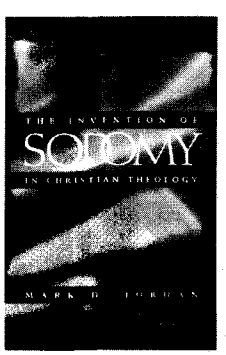

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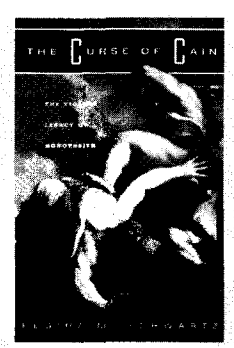

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Richard Alleva

NO ESCAPE

'Affliction'

The artistic strengths of *Affliction*, Paul Schrader's soon-to-be-released adaptation of the novel by Russell Banks, are apparent before the film is five minutes underway. Its flaws take a lot longer to kick in but they sure kick hard.

Making Canadian locations impersonate New Hampshire, cinematographer Paul Sarossy and designer Anne Pritchard create a town called Lawford that seems a real place dying a real death. Schrader and his casting directors have populated it with actors who look like recognizable townspeople enduring economic decay with jaundiced calm yielding to murderous depression. The *New Republic*'s Stanley Kauffmann rightly praised the way Sarossy's work on *The Sweet Hereafter* (another Russell Banks story) conveyed snow's several shades of white. He does the same thing for *Affliction*, but also recreates the *veil* of whiteness that hangs in wintry northern air even on clear days. Costumer François Laplante captures the quintessential wooliness of life in such a place, with even lovemaking carried on through thick sweaters and shirts and under heavy blankets. Also rendered well is the strange blend of tolerance and contempt males demonstrate toward each other in such a town as they go about filling the few jobs left and taking their pitiful alcoholic pleasures in the sole surviving bar and grill. In a place like Lawford, the epithet "asshole" is just a synonym for human being. Such words tend to lose their scurrility through repetition, and a good thing, too. You can't afford to put some guy through the nearest wall when he's supposed to be working beside you tomorrow. Yet it is precisely the susceptibility of the film's hero to violence that gives the movie's title its meaning.

Affliction is about male pride warped by the dysfunctional family and starved by desperate economics into *macho* brutality, paranoia, and, ultimately, madness. Battered by his father in childhood, divorced from a wife who lost all respect for him years ago, rarely allowed to visit the daughter he adores, Wade Whitehouse, officially the chief lawman in town but really only a crossing guard and a hired hand for Lawford's only successful businessman, yearns to find and assert his masculinity. He thinks he's found his chance when a visiting rich man is killed in a hunting accident. Linking the death to his own boss (who had bad business dealings with the dead fellow) and imagining a Mafia-style hit, Whitehouse becomes an avenging angel with nothing to avenge.

Nick Nolte is exactly the right actor for this role (and it's not surprising that he became the movie's executive producer) because there is something about wounded *machismo* that ignites his talent. (His greatest performance, the self-torturing painter in Scorsese's episode of *New York Stories*, is an unforgettable portrait in this vein.) Here, Nolte's sometimes irritating mixture of gruffness and hysteria is well employed. His face keeps setting in a sad, wry mask as his eyes scout the middle distance for some escape from humiliation. And when he says, "I get to feeling like a whipped dog; someday I'm gonna bite back," you know he means it and you know the bite will be deep.

So far, so real. But there is always a trap waiting for writers and directors in any drama about crescent madness, and that trap is predictability. There is simply nothing dramatic in watching a character slide without impediment into the abyss. An escape hatch must be kept open even if the escape isn't taken. By the midpoint of *Affliction*, after witnessing Wade's countless economic and emotional problems, and having been exposed by flashbacks to his ruinous childhood, we simply can't imagine any alternative to the catastrophe Whitehouse is heading for. And there isn't any. We may get the feeling that what we're watching isn't really the tragedy Schrader plainly intends but a case history, open and shut. Too briefly open. Irretrievably shut.

(Yes, I know Oedipus was doomed, too. But Oedipus, like many other tragic heroes, asserts his freedom of spirit *after* undergoing his doom. By the end of *Affliction*, Wade is just a psychotic wreck. Psychosis is a lamentable state, not a tragic one.)

Another problem: since we're brought so close to a madman-in-the-making, it is important that there be a supporting

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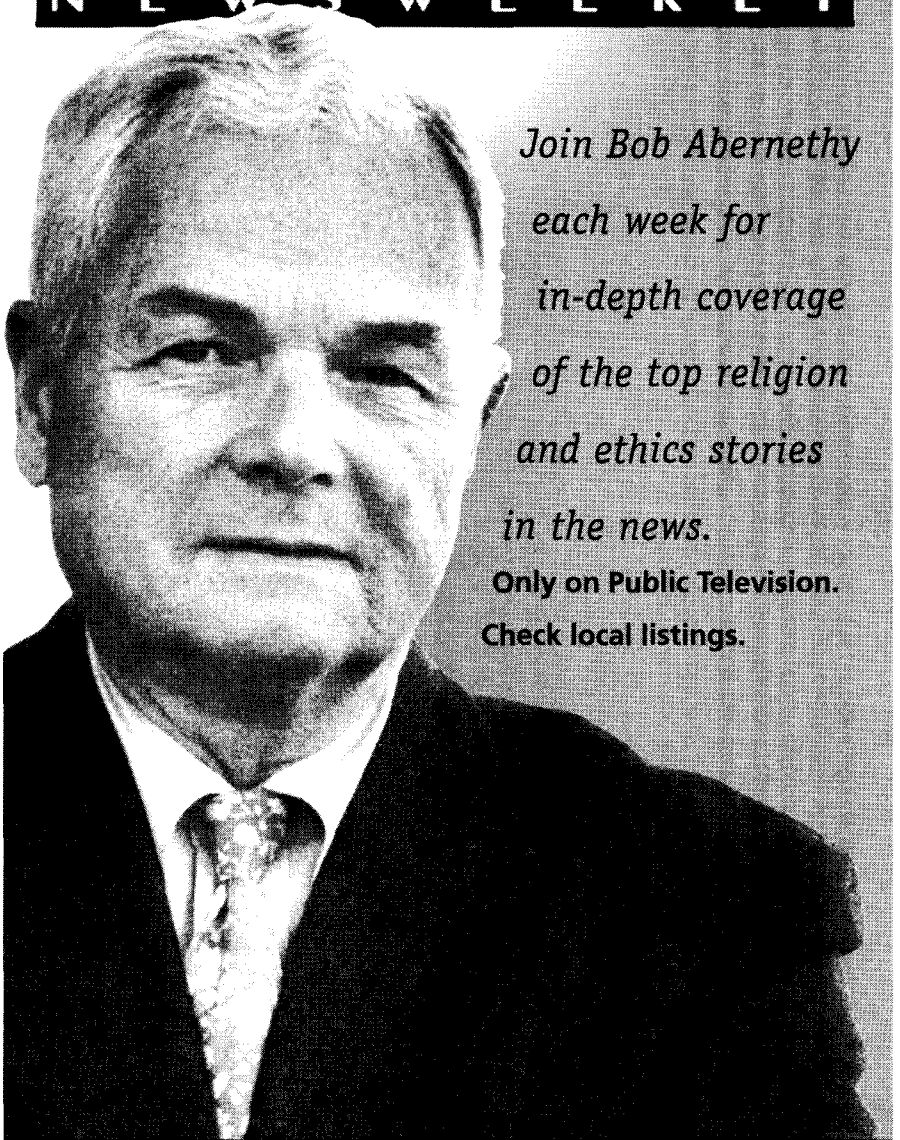
character whose sanity can both contrast with, and illuminate, the lead's madness. Lear has his Fool, Raskolnikov his Rasumikan. Wade's girlfriend (Sissy Spacek) almost serves that function, but she's at first oblivious to her lover's sickness and later so busy escaping from it that she can't shed any light on it.

The character plainly meant to put Wade in perspective is his brother Rolfe (Willem Dafoe), who both appears in the story and narrates it. But so inconsistent is the script's characterization of him (first Rolfe plants the idea of a murder plot in Wade's mind, then returns for no particular reason to warn his brother away from the idea of an investigation) and so ponderously written is his dialogue that this putatively sane sibling ends up seeming vaguely weird. The relationship between the brothers might have given this movie the stabilizing power it lacks. Having been shielded in childhood by his brother from the father's abuse, Rolfe can now say, "I was never afflicted by that man's violence." To which Wade responds, "That's what you think." Well, was Rolfe afflicted? And is that why he initially egged on his brother into a wrongheaded murder investigation? Is he less Horatio than Iago? Impossible to say since the script doesn't delve. (I haven't read the novel.)

Suppose Rolfe was kept on screen longer, initially helping his brother to investigate, and later, having realized the error, trying to pull Wade back from madness. The dramatic conflict this would have produced, as facts and insanity divided the siblings, would have made *Affliction* a true tragedy instead of the tract it finally becomes.

Do I sound more like a script doctor than a critic? There's a reason for that. So well shot, edited, directed, and acted is *Affliction* (and I haven't mentioned the great work done by James Coburn as the grizzly bear of a father, and by Holmes Osborne, who makes the local Croesus both nasty and pathetic), so authentic does it look and so potentially powerful is its story, that I found myself rooting for it even as it disappeared into the black hole of sociology. I never really wanted to criticize it. I wanted to fix it. □

Religion & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY



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A tapestry of life, woven in words

Kaaterskill Falls
Allegra Goodman
The Dial Press, $23.95, 324 pp.

Alice McDermott

Late in this marvelous novel by the author of *Total Immersion* and *The Family Merkowitz*, one of the central characters allows herself a moment of self-satisfaction. Elizabeth Shulman is a devoted wife and mother, a devout Orthodox Jew who lives comfortably in the confines of her family and her faith, but who recognizes nevertheless her desire, "intense as prayer," to create something "in the shimmering, spinning secular world," something that is hers alone.

In the summer of 1977 she has responded to this longing by opening, with the permission of her rabbi, the formidable Elijah Kirshner, a small kosher grocery in Kaaterskill, New York. The store caters to the needs of her city friends and neighbors, Kirshner followers all, who spend their summers in the small upstate town, and its success brings Elizabeth her moment of pride. "Somehow it returns to her—" Goodman writes, "the sense that this is her project, that she has created something of her own, even within the tight weave of associations in Kaaterskill—the family, the *Kehilla*, the neighborhood. She has knit from this mesh something entirely new."

Much the same can be said of Allegra Goodman's achievement here, for out of the limited and tightly bound world of her Orthodox Jewish characters she has created a novel that is as complex and intricate and wide-ranging in its wisdom as anything in recent fiction.

The novel follows three Orthodox Jewish families over the course of nearly three years, three summers in leafy Kaaterskill and various gatherings and holidays back in the city. The Shulmans' family life forms the center of the narrative, restless Elizabeth and her five growing daughters, her pious husband Isaac, the gentle ebb and flow of their religious and domestic life, the rise and fall of Elizabeth's ambition.

Their Kaaterskill neighbor Andras Melish and his wife and teen-age daughter form a second layer of narrative. Melish, a Hungarian who escaped the ravages of World War II as a teen-ager and is drawn to the town by his two beloved, aging sisters, watches with some bewilderment as his young Argentinian wife struggles to maintain every tradition of their Orthodox household; traditions that have become for him impossible to take seriously. "Andras's parents taught him that if you are going to be religious, you have to do it all, observing every holiday and law. They believed that when it comes to God you can't do things by halves—which is why they did nothing." His daughter Renee, seeking to find her own way to rebel within the confines of her family and her religion, befriends free-spirited Stephanie, an American girl of Arab descent, daughter, the story implies, of a criminal.

At the beating heart of the community, and the novel, is Rav Kirshner, a complex, richly drawn character, a rabbi who wears the "modern dress of the nineteenth-century man of business," a rationalist "interested in law, not myth." Here he is as he views, from the second story of his Kaaterskill home, his people walking to *shul*: "He wonders what they are thinking; how they view the world. There are fewer now from Germany....Their sabbaths have none of that grandeur, none of that ease.... Missing, and impossible to reclaim, is the old confidence about the world. A holocaust of blood has washed away his congregants' pretensions to a natural place, a decorative culture, a luxuriant, liberal education. The inner confidence remains."

As the ailing Rav approaches the end of his life, he must recognize his heir and reconcile his feelings for his two sons, Jeremy, the brilliant scholar who has turned against the religious life to find success in the secular academic world, or the dedicated but slow-wit-

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ted Isaiah, who aided and abetted by his own wife Rachel, has remained his father's faithful secretary.

But *Kaaterskill Falls* cannot be reduced to its lines of narrative or machinations of plot. The novel is instead a tapestry, a panoramic view of a community, a people and a place, that is as impressive in its scope—its almost nineteenth-century ability to create an interconnected world—as it is in its perfect-pitch use of dialogue and detail. (An eight-year-old singing an ancient hymn is "like a kazoo performance of Beethoven." Andras's wife Nina pronounces the word assimilation "slowly, as if she doesn't want to set it off.")

If the novel takes a misstep it is perhaps when it moves outside of this world it so beautifully establishes, and seeks to portray with equal authority the lives of the Yankee year-round residents of Kaaterskill, an effort that is admirably ambitious but that results only in several stock portraits of "townies," and a subplot involving a decade-old traffic accident and a real estate developer that adds nothing to the quiet rhythm of the novel as a whole.

For it is the novel's quiet rhythm that finally gives *Kaaterskill Falls* its strength. It is a rhythm that eloquently, inexorably comes to depict a careful, considered, reverent regard for the place religion has in both the natural world and in the lives of believers, an understanding of the way their faith shapes their days, their journey through life, as clearly and inevitably as does the progression of the seasons. Elizabeth knows that "her religious life is not something she can cast off, it's part of her. Its rituals are not rituals to her; not objects, but instincts." Her husband Isaac recognizes a duty that "in his daily studies he still strive to understand, identify, to take a text to heart, to reach through the centuries of commentary, those layers of *responsa*, and grasp a meaning that is strong, believable. And when it happens, and the words unfold for him and touch his life, this is a moment of great joy." □

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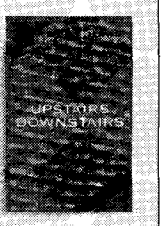

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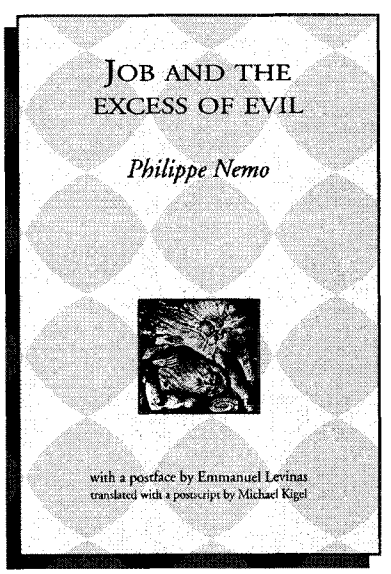
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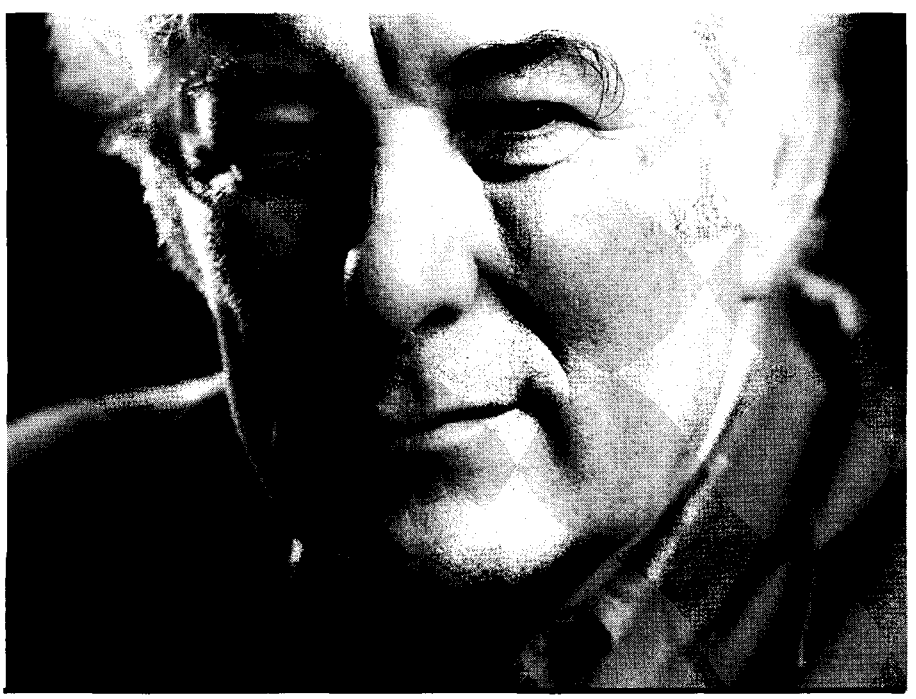
A POET ILLUMINATED

Seamus Heaney
Helen Vendler
Harvard University Press, $22.95, 224 pp.

Daria Donnelly

Helen Vendler, the A. Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard, and America's best-known poetry critic, has been an ardent admirer of Seamus Heaney since she first heard him read at the Yeats School in Sligo in 1975. It must have been a stunning moment of the soul leaping up in recognition: her appetite and love for poetry, apprenticeship in Yeats, commitment to writing for both a professional and general audience, and generous temperament are all met in the poet. It will be for literary historians to tell the story of their friendship, and the role her work (seminars, essays, practical advocacy that brought him for five years to Harvard) played in his development. This new volume, *Seamus Heaney*, will stand at the center of that story's latter half. Felicitously timed as a companion to Heaney's new *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966–96* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux $25, 464 pages), Vendler's book is a clear, concise, and comprehensive study of Heaney's poetic *oeuvre* offered in the aftermath of his international fame.

Vendler sets herself three tasks: "to show by what imaginative, structural, and stylistic means Heaney raises his subjects to a plane that compels such worldwide admiration"; to testify to Heaney's "vigilant willingness to change" as it is embodied in thirty years of poetic evolution as well as in poems that directly talk back to earlier ones; and, third, to convey the ways in which Heaney's poems have enlarged "the specifically literary inheritance on which they depend." Vendler keeps all three of these tasks in mind as she moves from poem to poem, volume to volume (nine in all), structuring her study by means of a series of "A" words (anonymities, archaeologies, anthropologies, alterities and alter egos, allegories, airiness, and afterwards) which describe, but never reduce, Heaney's poetic strategies. The sheer pacing of her original and lithe insights makes this a *tour de force* of literary description. (And though I occasionally felt impeded by the apodictic statements that launch her close reading of poems, I concluded that they are more stylistic than invitations to serious quarrel).



Vendler strikes just the right note in her analysis of the relationship between Heaney's evolving poetic style and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Born in 1939 in County Derry, Heaney, a Catholic, came to poetry just moments before the Catholic minority took to the streets of Belfast and Derry to demand their civil rights, a flowering of desire for change whose thwarted fruit was "a quarter century of life—waste and spirit-waste," as Heaney called it in his Nobel lecture. While the accumulation of that still unconcluded history wrought some changes of emphasis in Heaney's essentially elegiac vocation, it provoked far more dramatic changes in his methods. He has moved from a search for adequate outward symbols to describe reality, to an inward dramatization of the conflict, to, more recently, a philosophical consideration of his desire for equilibrium. In her attention to Heaney's "second thoughts," a phrase she borrows from his poem "Terminus," Vendler makes a powerful argument for his humane political witness, accomplished by being faithful to the aim of lyric poetry, "to grasp and perpetuate, by symbolic form, the self's volatile and transient here and now."

Because Vendler's work here is description and appreciation, she makes virtually no negative or comparative judgments about the poems and books that she so beautifully explicates. I admire this as a principled resistance to a culture (general and academic) that mistakes irony and aggression for intelligence. But I also think that a pugnacious and exacting reader, such as the poet Mary Kinzie, not only can brilliantly illuminate a poet's art but also can accommodate those who instinctively resist the poems. (Her essay on Seamus Heaney, centered on the poem "Sandstone Keepsake," can be found in *The Cure of Poetry in an Age of Prose: Moral Essays on the Poet's Calling* [University of Chicago Press].)

In particular, I wish that Vendler had

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pressed harder against Heaney's professed relationship to Catholicism. The poet respects faith, is comfortable in his unbelief, reaches for poetry as a restorative force, and uses Catholic mythology and sociology as poetic resources. Because she leaves that account unexamined, Vendler's close readings of poems that touch on religious matters are partial. Relying (uncharacteristically) on the teller rather than the tale, Vendler does not consider the word "risking," and so fails to hear the religious nuances in the conclusion of Heaney's "Elegy" for Robert Lowell, "the fish-dart of your eyes/risking, 'I'll pray for you.'" More importantly, she does not distinguish poems that are dulled by announced unbelief from those, such as "Clearances" (section iii), that are sharpened by it. In this gorgeous elegy for his mother, the poet recalls, at her deathbed, their peeling potatoes together, "her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives," while the parish priest goes "hammer and tongs at prayers for the dying." By allowing the estranged and estranging religion in the poem to be opposed by, and found unexpectedly congruent with, the work of poetry, Heaney realizes the "equilibrium" whose poetic, political, and spiritual value he so eloquently sets out in the essay, "The Redress of Poetry."

I was very happy to be led by Vendler to Heaney's 1991 sequence, "Squarings," in which his poetic theory of equilibrium takes on (in sections vi, vii, xii, xxiv, and xxvii) metaphysical force. When the poems merely posit external pressure (metaphysical or political), they tend to overreach in their claims, or conversely, in their despair. I find myself attracted to poems that present the shock (the wound) of external judgment without either overstating or overmanaging it ("A Constable Calls," "Sandstone Keepsake," "The Haw Lantern"). These are poems of breathtaking equilibrium, where Heaney holds off both his equanimity and his "responsible *tristia*." It was Vendler's illuminating orientation that set me in search of them. □

Daria Donnelly *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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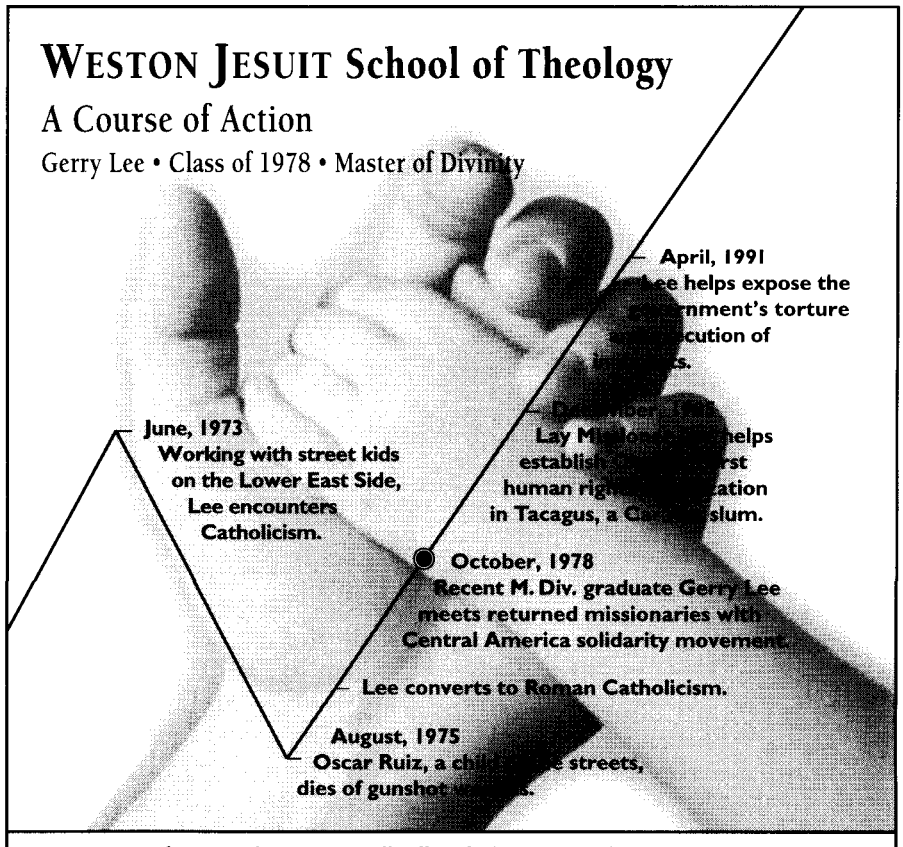

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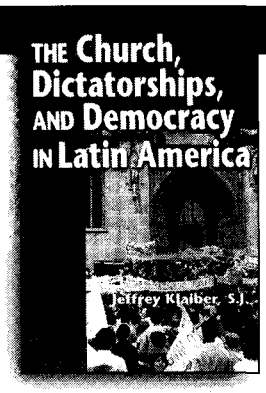

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THE SOURCE OF OUR SELVES

Shakespeare
The Invention of the Human
Harold Bloom
Riverhead Books, $35, 768 pp.

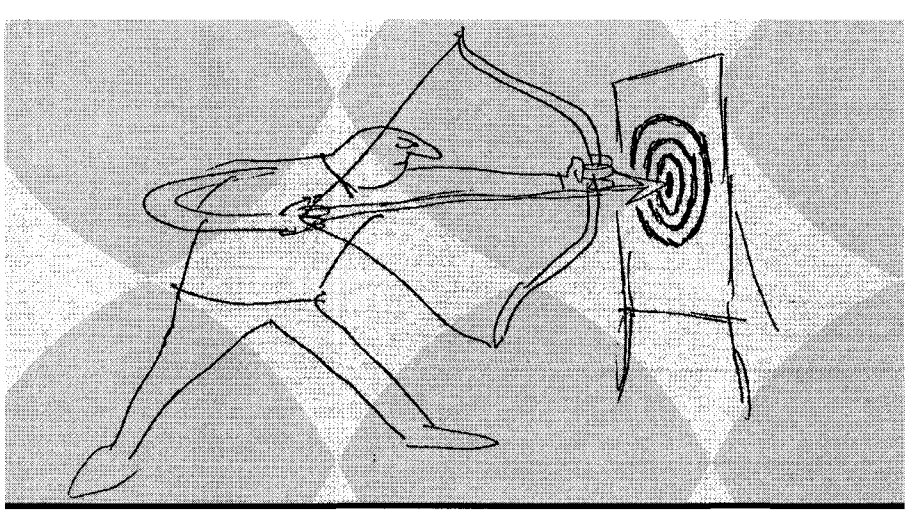
Frank McConnell

I have to begin by acknowledging that Harold Bloom has been, for almost forty years, a major presence in my life. He was my teacher and my dissertation advisor at Yale—a role equivalent to that of "Godfather" in Mario Puzo's universe—and has continued to be my friend, adversary, rabbi, and counselor. This, in other words, is not an objective review. How could it be?

Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human is, simply, the book of a lifetime, the culmination of a career—twenty-two previous books, and countless essays, editions, introductions, etc.—devoted, with an intensity that needs to be called "holy," to understanding literature as the human testament, as, however ambiguously, the means to secular salvation. And now at the end (and Bloom knows it's the end: this is in every sense a summary book) he argues that such salvation exists, if anywhere, most splendidly in the works of Shakespeare, the heart of the heart of the Western canon, the man who—he's really serious about this—invented us.

What an astonishing claim, especially in the currently politicized academic climate. But into the midst of this spiritual desert comes Bloom, proclaiming at the top of his voice—alas, like his least favorite prophet, Jeremiah, he seems to know no other register—that literature matters because it helps us save or at least possess our souls, and that no, that's *no*, literature matters as intensely as Shakespeare's just because Shakespeare, in any human context, is the greatest writer who ever lived.

The only thing more astonishing than Bloom's claim for the centrality of Shakespeare is that the claim will almost certainly be derided by the *apparatchiks* currently in charge of departments of English. *Shakespeare* is bound to get bad reviews from the professionals—I have in mind here folks like Gary Taylor and Gerald Graff—because it's a call, and a splendid one, to just that kind of reading the professionals fear and are incapable of, the full engagement of the mind and soul with the book at hand. Bloom here, as everywhere in his work, is a true elitist: Ph.D. or taxi driver, you are in his church if you can open yourself to the poem and find yourself there. Against this absolute love of what poetry really does for us, the idea of the "profession" of literature pales,



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as it should, altogether.

Now all this sounds as though Bloom regards literature, and Shakespeare especially, as the only authentic religious text for modern mankind; and that's just the point. Bloom means his subtitle literally. For him, Shakespeare does invent us all, at our heights and depths and our in-betweens, and to discover him is to discover who we are. But I have to quarrel with this assignment of total originality to the Bard. Virgil, of whom Bloom says nothing, and Saint Augustine and Dante seem to me equally creators of the Western idea of the self. But then I only read, teach, and love Shakespeare. I do not, like Bloom, inhabit him. Harold is fond of describing himself as a Jewish gnostic atheist (shuffle the terms any way you like—he does), and that's about right, since it means he's essentially a deeply troubled religious man, which is to say the only kind of religious man the twentieth century can tolerate. I'd like to introduce him to my favorite living theologian, John Dunne. Anyway, it's significant to me that the other commentators on Shakespeare to whom Bloom refers most often—and again, in defiance of current academic fashion—are Samuel Johnson, G. K. Chesterton, and W.H. Auden—all of them, with different and masterly kinkinesses, profoundly religious writers.

Bloom's thesis is simple and his procedure even simpler. William Shakespeare invented all the possibilities for the modern personality, from Hamlet to Falstaff, and all you have to do to discover the truth of that is to read all thirty-seven of his plays.

Now there's not much new about this. Of course Shakespeare is our strong precursor, and of course his massive presence towers over everything since—and, scarily, before—him. Mozart? Not really. The right analogy for him is Beethoven, who so exhausts the possibilities of music that there is very little left after him but—Brahms to Wagner to Mahler—belated commentary. George Steiner, observing the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964, wrote that "the very words with which we seek to do him honor are his." I don't know a more eloquent tribute—it's how I always begin my own class in Shakespeare—and I'm sure Bloom would not mind my describing his brilliant book as a long excursus on that splendid observation.

But Bloom's *Shakespeare* is not just about "words." In fact, close reading, the careful attention to metaphor, versification, and plot structure has never been his strong point or his major interest. His authentic passion—as with the unapproachable Samuel Johnson and the great critic/sages of the Romantic era—is with the creation of possibilities of human character, the forging of mirrors in which we see ourselves better, literature as "equipment for living," as Kenneth Burke called it. In a world where academic criticism is ever more aridly formalist and/or politically correct, ever less connected to the needs of human readers, this book is exhilaratingly old-fashioned, arguing, as did Matthew Arnold and Cardinal Newman, that we read poetry to save, or find, our lives.

There's, in fact, a central connection between *Shakespeare* and Bloom's earlier book, *The Book of J*, where he writes a superb commentary on "J," or the Yahwist, the earliest narrator of the Hebrew Scriptures. J and Shakespeare, Bloom has often written, are the only two writers who are, for him, absolutely original: that is, without any real precursors. (I'd quarrel here too—but only against the assumption, not against the brilliance the assumption generates.) For Bloom, the signal gift J and Shakespeare, in their austere originality, bring us is their interpretation of the Old Testament idea of The Blessing, which Bloom identifies, lucidly, as "more life." Nothing if not a vitalist, Bloom finds in Shakespeare (and J) a gift of life imagined and consciousness created which makes us—even against our will—richer for reading them.

Two colossal figures in the Shakespeare canon incarnate and exhaust the promise of "more life": Falstaff and Hamlet. Falstaff is, for Bloom, the very archetype of life in the moment, of consciousness as a perpetual, minute-by-minute celebration of itself and all it sees, for all the ill it sees: he identifies himself as primarily Falstaffian, and I think he would say the same for his favorite mod-

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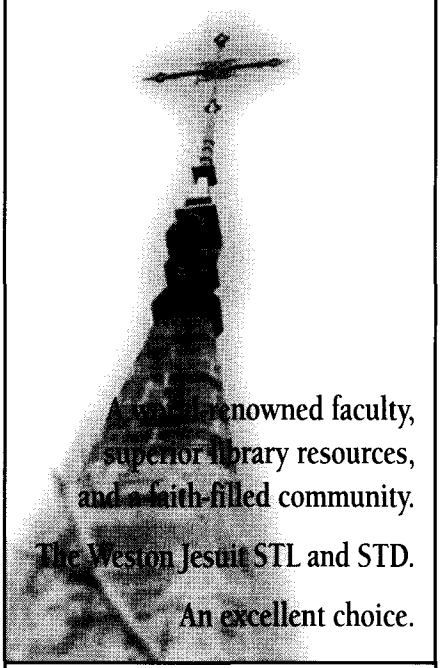

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ern poet, Wallace Stevens. And if Falstaff is all immanence, Hamlet, his only conceivable rival in acuity of intelligence, is all transcendence, aware to the point of pain of the world's complexity, and wanting nothing so much as to evade it all for the absoluteness of one's own being. Hamlet, after all, is the only major character in Shakespeare whose first words on stage are an aside—addressed not to anybody in the play, but to the audience, or just to himself.

Bloom manages to weave this grand opposition across the whole range of the plays, illuminating all the major characters—Rosalind, the Fool in *Lear*, Macbeth, Iago, etc.—and making wonderful if idiosyncratic sense out of why we find Shakespeare, somehow, simply indispensable. Is Bloom autocratic and eccentric? Have any of our truly valuable critics been anything else?

I've been teaching Shakespeare for almost as long as Bloom has. My course is "Shakespeare for Non-English Majors," since I really believe the poet is too important to be left in the hands of the technologues of culture. But, for all our long friendship, Bloom and I have never had a conversation about the Bard. So I'm delighted—and bemused—to find that we share so many healthy prejudices about him. *Twelfth Night* is the better play, but how can you not prefer *As You Like It*, since it has the infinitely lovable ("Falstaff's niece," according to himself) Rosalind? And Iago is just too much fun to be true, while Prince Hal (later Henry V) is a Nixonian, cold-as-a-fish monster.

But that's just my personal delight at encountering this great book. Bloom has finally achieved what I think he wanted all along. If any writer in this century, in English, comes close to the moral stature of Samuel Johnson, we have to say now that it is Harold Bloom. If you believe that literature is a crucial fact of being human, for God's sake read and use this book. Almost as much as its great original, it contains the Blessing: more life. □

Frank McConnell, Commonweal*'s media critic, teaches English literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

DEFINING FREEDOM ISN'T EASY

The Story of American Freedom
Eric Foner
W. W. Norton, $27.95, 422 pp.

Alan Wolfe

Once upon a time, surely before the advent of tenure, historians were disposed to write panoramic accounts of an important idea, synthesizing huge amounts of scholarship in a language accessible to nonspecialists. Eric Foner's *The Story of American Freedom* harkens back to that era. Welcome at any time, his book is especially welcome now. In recent decades scholars have stressed the role that previously invisible individuals—most of them women and people of color—have played in our nation's development. For them, freedom was the idea around which their political struggles were organized. By organizing his historical survey around the same idea, Foner has produced an impressive challenge to the postmodern suspicion of master narratives. No one can finish this book without appreciating the centrality of freedom for the American experience.

The Story of American Freedom is at its best when demonstrating how contested a concept freedom really is. Were wage workers in the nineteenth century free because they were not slaves, as Frederick Douglass once proudly proclaimed, or unfree because they could be considered wage slaves? Were white women free because they did not have owners who could sell them, or unfree, and thus comparable to slaves, because they were subject to the authority of their husbands? Was freedom best guaranteed by property or by government? None of these questions had easy or automatic answers, and Foner offers his readers a fascinating guide through the appeals made by individuals on all sides of these issues.

Oddly, however, Foner's insightful elaborations of the complications of freedom in nineteenth-century America turn simplistic when he comes to the twentieth century. The closer we get to the present day, the more certain is Foner that freedom is not a contested concept at all. On the contrary, he insists, there is usually one party that speaks clearly and unambiguously for freedom and one that does not. And invariably Foner identifies the cause of freedom with his own particular view of how the world ought to work.

Sometimes it does make sense to insist that freedom has to mean something concretely, from which it follows that some people who use its language deny its meaning. Freedom, as Foner points out, provided the language by which Southern whites defended slavery, Northern businessmen fought unions, and the national security establishment justified the cold war. Unwilling to stretch the reach of the concept that much, Foner rightly seeks to narrow the meaning of freedom to those actions—such as the abolition of slavery or the establishment of the New Deal—which enhanced the autonomy and dignity of large numbers of Americans. But in doing so, Foner narrows the conception of freedom in ways which will prevent his book from becoming the definitive work it ought to have been.

Clearly slaveholders abused the language of freedom, just as segregationists distorted the language of rights by claiming them for states rather than people. But is it just as obvious, as Foner suggests, that national-security managers abused the language of freedom in justifying the cold war?

It is if one believes that the cold war was little more than an excuse for American imperialism. Neither Soviet dissidents nor the leaders of the pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe thought that way, however. For them, a willingness to confront Soviet power advanced the cause of freedom. By the same logic, those American leftists who

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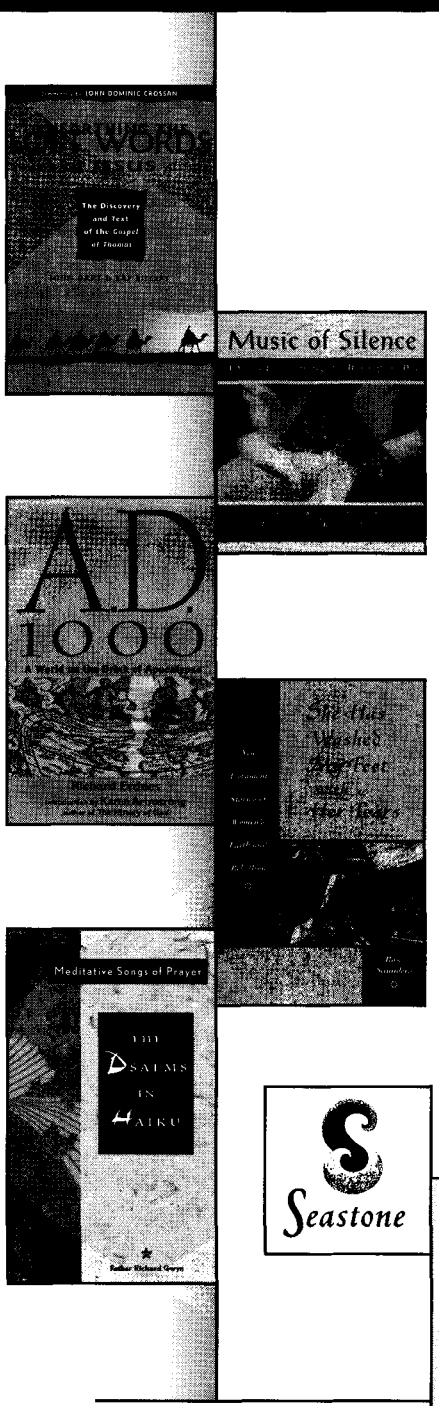

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viewed the cold war as a sham were not serving the cause of freedom so much as they were exposing their narcissistic naiveté.

Foner celebrates the contributions these critics made to American freedom as he speaks with disdain of the establishment. But just as international politics were morally problematic, so were domestic politics in ways Foner never acknowledges. The cold war, Foner writes, "helped to legitimize a serious assault on civil liberties at home," noting that "the tiny Communist party hardly posed a threat to American security and many of the victims of the Red Scare had little or nothing to do with communism."

Foner never mentions the fact that the American Communist party avidly supported the Red Scare, defending the use of the Smith Act against Trotskyites. It seems irrelevant to him that, in its internal structure, the Communist party denied dissent and organized itself in a highly authoritarian manner. Foner is right that the Communist party was no threat to American security. But its principles were alien to American ideals of freedom, a point that at the very least ought to be mentioned in a book celebrating the story of freedom.

In his discussion of contemporary events, Foner drops the rich appreciation of nuance that characterizes his treatment of earlier struggles over wages and family life. At one point he quotes the political philosopher Jean Cohen's important assertion that respect for privacy is the linchpin of freedom, but he fails to acknowledge the role that the New Left's slogan "The Personal is the Political" might have contributed to the abrogation of privacy. He discusses the influence of Herbert Marcuse on the New Left, but never mentions Marcuse's notorious essay "Repressive Tolerance," which argued against free speech—at least as that term is traditionally understood by civil libertarians. And since Marcuse's essay was the intellectual inspiration for current university speech codes and stabs at political correctness, Foner also never mentions these exercises in unfreedom, even though he does carry his story up to the 1990s.

Freedom is too important a term to be reduced to one side in political or ideological debate. One of the reasons Foner can be so clear and compelling when dealing with the nineteenth century is that we now have enough perspective to know which side advanced the cause of freedom and which did not. But can we really know that for the present time? I am no great fan of Ronald Reagan and I find myself persistently at odds with the conservative ideas on which he rode to power. But can I really be sure that the Reagan administration—or, for that matter, the Thatcher administration—did not serve the cause of freedom? Some day we may discover that contemporary conservatives used the language of freedom to justify unequal distributions of income which left all too many Americans unable to control their lives. But we might also discover that the bureaucratic state had overreached itself and that unleashing more entrepreneurial activity also unleashed unexpected cultural and personal freedom.

The story of freedom, in short, never ends and does not contain clear-cut political conclusions. Unfortunately, *The Story American of Freedom*—for all its breadth, energy, and insight—does both. □

Alan Wolfe *is University Professor and Professor of Political Science and Sociology at Boston University. His most recent book is* One Nation, After All *(Viking Penguin).*

OPENING THE BIBLE

The Word According to Eve
Women and the Bible in Ancient Times and Our Own
By Cullen Murphy
Houghton Mifflin, $24, 302 pp.

Sara Maitland

Repeatedly throughout this excellent book, Cullen Murphy argues that "feminism's encounter with religion" is profoundly radical and that the changes that it has wrought upon biblical studies constitute nothing less than "the next intellectual revolution." I rather doubt this myself: If there is indeed a true intellectual revolution afoot (or rather ahead, in both senses) it springs not from feminism's encounter with religion but from feminism itself. The religious intervention is simply a part of this larger phenomenon. Compared with, say, feminism's encounter with classical Marxism or feminism's encounter with theories of representation, its influence on religion has not been that significant. However, Murphy's case is strongly endorsed by the structure and style, as well as the con-

"I never said it was all Bathsheba's fault!"

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tent, of his book. This sort of book would simply be unimaginable without feminist theological methodology; it could not have been written ten years ago.

The Word According to Eve is not a history of ideas—the sort of book that traces the evolution of a particular way of reading the Bible. It is not a series of biographical sketches of feminist biblical scholars. And it is not "Bible stories for grown-ups." Murphy's book is a crafty combination of all three and therefore something new.

The subtitle—*Women and the Bible in Ancient Times and Our Own*—summarizes his approach. A key element in feminist theory is that it is impossible to write without a personal agenda—there is no abstract author, or abstract truth. The writer (or any other subject) is inevitably structured by a personal history, including gender. To admit this, to relate one's agenda to the matter at hand, is not only a question of honesty: it is the only way forward ("the personal is the political" was the classical formulation). The reasons why people arrive at certain sets of ideas will form part of those ideas. In short, it is not "special pleading," "emotionalism," or "bad scholarship" to study something of the scholar along with the scholarly handling of the scholar's subject matter.

Murphy therefore looks at the development of feminist hermeneutics (or Bible reading) through the lens of the women who are doing it. With a pretty discreet courtesy, he brings these contemporary scholars—and they are all academics, incidentally, which is interesting—into a human relationship with their readers, so as to bring their readers into a human relationship both with the women of the Bible and with the ways in which we might read that text.

I am making this sound complicated, and it is probably vital to add that not only could this book not have been written ten years ago but that it could only have been written by a skillful journalist (Murphy is managing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*), someone with an eye both for the story and for the human-interest touches that illuminate the story. Murphy is extremely smart. There has been an explosion of approaches to the Bible over the last century, and these include not just traditional theological explorations but also anthropological, sociological, archaeological, historical, and literary (to name but a few) critical methods. The material is dense and complicated. Murphy does not so much pick his way through this dense forest as dance through it. To locate these women scholars he gives us thumbnail sketches of place, from university quads to Middle Eastern mountain tops. Careful quotation gives these women domestic voices as well as professional ones, and Murphy's own knowledge is displayed in such a way as to give the reader confidence in his selection rather than to overawe.

I suspect that some of the grace of this book—a grace which manifests itself, incidentally, in a considerable degree of both humor and self-revelation—comes from a genuine affection (if that is not too light a word) for the Bible itself. Mur-

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phy obviously has a real desire to come to terms with this impossible, demanding, impelling, and aggressively tricky text. The writer wants to know, he wants to engage, he wants me, the reader, to engage. But to engage, not to submit. He is very clear that the Bible constitutes an unusually "open" text: It can be read in a very great number of ways, as well as approached through a great number of methods. While literary theory would now insist that there are multiple readings for any text, this is both more true and more obvious of the Bible (because of the long period over which it was constructed in its present form, because it has been a key text for three different, and frequently contesting religions, because it is not clearly genre-coded, and for other reasons).

Broadly, Murphy divides his book by methodologies, by ways of coming into relationship with the Bible. This makes sense and makes for a well-paced and variegated read. I personally found the archaeological chapters the most interesting; and over all found the Old Testament section more fascinating than the New Testament. This may be because I know more about the New Testament material and the New Testament scholars, and consequently became more conscious of what seemed to me like omissions. Where were the liberation theologians, the Socialist politicized readings of the Bible? Perhaps "not in the United States" is the answer, but from a European standpoint that seems interesting in itself. Where are the "imaginative," recreative biblicists who use both literary and classical preaching genres? Not in the academies is probably the answer.

But these are quibbles. *The Word According to Eve* is highly engaging and readable, regardless of your degree of knowledge. It is generous in spirit and open-minded, and it gives a valuable access to an important area of scholarship that is too often presented as inflammatory or trivial. We have a lot to thank Cullen Murphy for here. □

Sara Maitland *is a novelist and theologian. Among her more recent books is* Angel Matter: The Collected Stories *(Henry Holt).*

WORTH READING TWICE

Master Georgie
Beryl Bainbridge
Carroll & Graf, $21, 192 pp.

Daniel M. Murtaugh

Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie* pursues the interests and, to some extent, the methods of her two previous historical novels, *The Birthday Boys* (1995) and *Every Man for Himself* (1996). Those two novels dealt with memorable events of 1912: the fatal expedition to the South Pole led by Robert Falcon Scott and the sinking of the *Titanic*. These disasters were celebrated in England for their displays of chivalry *in extremis*, the attractive, manly imprudence and amateurism which, to the disenchanted and postimperial eye, were largely responsible for bringing them about. Scott's expedition failed, after all, because it lacked the prosaic professionalism of the Norwegian team that reached the Pole with no casualties. And nearly half of the capacity of the *Titanic*'s lifeboats went unused because there were no precautionary boat drills. But this incompetence was the *felix culpa* that gave a premise to heroism and models for England's young men. *Master Georgie* takes us back some six decades to the Crimean War, a scandalously mismanaged campaign which squandered troops to disease and mud and had its most conspicuous folly, the charge of the Light Brigade, burnished into another chivalric myth by Lord Tennyson.

The charge impinges obliquely on the action of *Master Georgie*. On the miserable periphery of battle, one of its three narrators takes some comfort in being "at least better off as far as transport is concerned; three days ago over two hundred cavalry horses of the Light Brigade stampeded into the camp, their riders having perished in a charge along the north valley." He buys at auction a "mare so shocked by its recent subjection to bombardment as to have passed beyond nervousness into a state bordering on imbecility, and therefore manageable."

That obliqueness characterizes the whole novel. The central character, George Hardy, is visible to us only in the cracked mirror of the accounts of three dependents. He is a restless, attractive bisexual, heir to a Liverpool fortune, a surgeon and amateur photographer who feels "that the war would at last provide him with the prop he needed." He is, in different ways, a beloved central concern of Myrtle, a foundling servant girl who bears his children; Pompey Jones, a child of the streets who learns photography from him; and Dr. Potter, a pompous and touchingly uxorious amateur scholar who is married to George's sister Beatrice. Each of these tells two of the novel's six chapters, starting in Liverpool in 1846 and ending outside Sebastopol in 1854.

George's interest in photography informs the structure of these chapters. Each is called a "Plate," dated, and given a title which is actually a caption: "Girl in the Presence of Death," "A Veil Lifted," "Funeral Procession Shadowed by Beatrice," and so on. Each chapter moves toward the exposure of one of these plates and the production of the captioned picture. So the narrative action resolves itself into a pictorial summary, which, as it turns out, falsifies what we have been told. The medium that gives its very name to an ideal of

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verisimilitude conspires with Victorian sentimentality. In plate 1, the twelve-year-old Myrtle acts the part of a pious mourner over the corpse of George's father after joining with George and Pompey Jones in a cover-up of the disgraceful circumstances of his death. In plate 6, George's own corpse is propped among the living to round out "a group of survivors to send to the folks back home" and urged, with them, to "Smile, boys, smile."

The most affecting use of photography involves a bit of magic realism. The debilitated Dr. Potter, attending a funeral for a cartload of naked soldiers, resorts to hallucination and conjures up the image of his longed-for wife Beatrice, smiling and beckoning him with a maternal sweetness that suggests her namesake in Dante. Just then Pompey Jones has set up his tripod and taken a picture of the funeral party. In the following chapter, Pompey examines his print and sees a blur in the corner resolve itself into the figure of Beatrice. The longing that created Potter's hallucination has burned itself into the plate.

The three characters are bound to one another in their orbits around George by fated linkages of coincidence which I do not need to detail here, and which are the subject of reflection by Potter. The three are also linked erotically: Potter through his relationship to Beatrice, Myrtle and Pompey through their separate liaisons with George. In the end, tipped out of their wagon into the mud as they barely escape death in battle, Myrtle and Pompey grope toward, then back away from, a sexual union. Pompey then dismisses the episode as "not being a matter of great importance. All I'd ever wanted, as regards Myrtle, was the recognition that she and I were of a kind, seeing that fate had tumbled the two of us into Master Georgie's path." That erotic dimension of social class is expressed more tellingly by Myrtle earlier in the novel in a conversation with the mistress of a colonel of the Guards. Her colonel and she "talk for hours at a stretch," her friend tells Myrtle. "That's unusual, isn't it?" Myrtle agrees politely but thinks to herself: "Georgie's not one for talking, at least, not to me. Nor would I wish to be his equal, for then I might find him wanting."

In the novel's first chapter, in Liverpool, that self-protective deference shows itself as she walks quickly behind George, wishing but not expecting that he will turn back to look at her. In its final pages, outside Sebastopol, rashly, she calls to him from behind because she has hurt her foot. He turns to her and away from a rifle raised against him, and, in a variation on Orpheus and Eurydice, he meets his death.

I hope I have conveyed that this is a very rich novel. It is not an ingratiating one on the first reading. It is ironic. It works very quickly in its 192 pages, demanding close attention and not yielding the pleasures of uncomplicated identification with its characters. But go back and read it again, and it will astonish you. □

Daniel M. Murtaugh *is associate professor of English and director of writing programs at Florida Atlantic University.*

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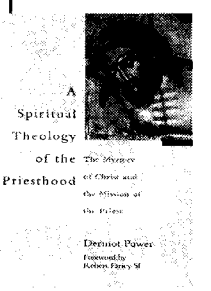

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MIRRORS FOR THE MEDIA

Governing with the News
The News Media as a Political Institution
Timothy E. Cook
University of Chicago Press, $17.95, 289 pp.

What the People Know
Freedom and the Press
Richard Reeves
Harvard University Press, $19.95, 147 pp.

Robert Schmuhl

Ever since Monica Lewinsky became a household name, the American news media have conducted themselves with the restraint of a fire department responding to a five-alarm blaze. Assuming the "Big Story" stance of O.J. Simpson's sorry saga and Princess Diana's untimely demise, journalists and talk-show hosts have made it difficult to think about anything other than President Bill Clinton's libido—or his energetic efforts to hide it.

Oddly, though, the accumulated facts and charges defy the popular intuition that negative information about someone will engender a general opinion of disapproval about that person. In fact, Clinton has received stronger approval ratings for his work as president since the initial Lewinsky disclosures in January.

That puzzling paradox raises larger questions about media power and influence. Are citizens separating revelations about private behavior from judgments of public performance? Are opinions of the president's deeds in elective office more influential than his unofficial conduct? Are people saying the media have gone too far in covering the story? Does their continued support of the president carry the implied hope the sordid spectacle will just end?

Using different approaches and methods, Timothy E. Cook and Richard Reeves address central issues of media impact and power in fresh, illuminating ways. More importantly, however, both authors convincingly argue that journalists themselves need to reassess their responsibilities and roles in reporting about politics and government today. "Know thyselves," Cook and Reeves implore; and given that knowledge, a more professional journalism might develop to strengthen American political life.

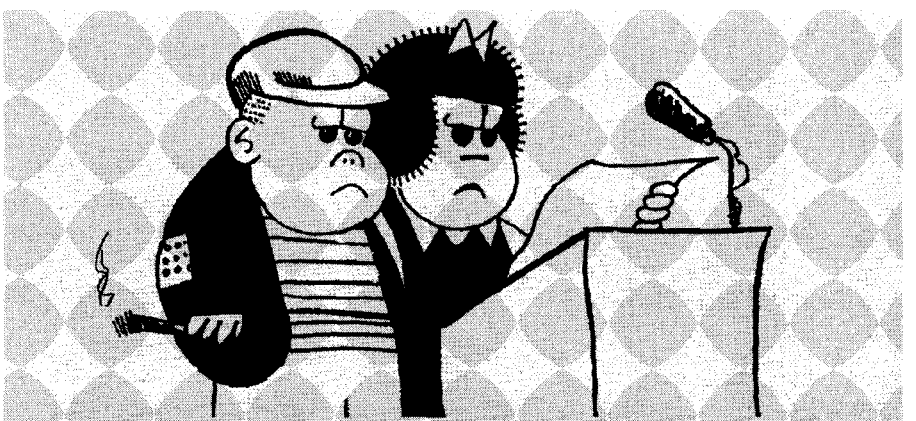
A professor of political science at Williams College, Cook mines a wealth of historical and organizational literature to assert that the news media are a distinct political institution in our democratic system. Unlike the constitutionally defined branches—executive, legislative, and judiciary—the news media are "intermediary institutions" similar to political parties and interest groups.

As Cook meticulously shows, everything from early Republic postal subsidies to the contemporary emphasis on governmental public relations (and even White House "spin control") reflects an intertwining of journalism with politics or government. Statecraft and stagecraft go hand-in-hand, despite protestations of journalists that the First Amendment keeps them free from any entanglements.

Noting that "newspersons are not a reflective bunch," Cook makes a case that they should think more deeply about what they do and what impact it has. In the judicious phrasing one finds throughout the book, he explains: "journalists are political actors. This does not mean that reporters have political axes to grind or are consciously pursuing particular partisan or ideological agendas. On the contrary, what is so complicated about assessing the role of newspersons is that their political influence may emerge not in spite of, but because of, their principled adherence to norms of objectivity, deference to factuality and authority, and a let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may distance from the political and social consequences of their coverage."

In the past four decades, the news media have assumed greater significance in all aspects of American life. Cook explains how public figures today factor newsmaking into much of their work, leading to an unhealthy emphasis on journalistic rather than political values.

When "standards of newsworthiness begin to become prime criteria to evaluate issues, policies, and politics," is it any wonder why we see so much partisan conflict and so little politician-to-politician consensus? The media love contests between easily identifiable opponents, the more vivid the soundbite the better. Success in gaining media coverage can result in political advancement and real clout. Appropriately, Cook calls Newt Gingrich "the poster child for media-mindedness on Capitol Hill," ob-



"The media's credibility woes continued today, when Nancy and Sluggo admitted they aren't children, but middle-aged, growth-stunted adults, 'just trying to make a buck.'"

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serving that the House Speaker rose quickly in Republican ranks with "a heavy reliance upon a media strategy."

Although there's not enough attention devoted to the informal, at times contradictory, nature of news-media power—for instance, different kinds of journalism have highly variable consequences, given particular circumstances—*Governing with the News* demonstrates that journalists are *not* disengaged bystanders, chronicling political and governmental affairs as complete outsiders. Cook hopes the emergence of "public journalism" and new forms of information technology will make newspeople better understand the role they play in our democracy and help improve their work.

Reeves, a syndicated columnist and author (*President Kennedy: Profile of Power*), draws on almost four decades of experience and a library of reading to describe the evolving relationship between what he nostalgically calls "the press" and the political world. *What the People Know* is a penetrating primer from inside the contemporary news business that simultaneously reflects the writer's affection for and dissatisfaction with his craft.

While Cook worries about the consequences of journalistic values on politics and government, Reeves frets over the influence of bottom-line, audience-building business concerns on news decisions. Public-opinion polling and focus-group feedback determine what people want at the expense of what news they need to be informed. "News is being created by a journalism of artificial insemination," Reeves observes, with professional standards taking a back seat to survey statistics.

In urging the citizenry to hold the news media more accountable, Reeves offers detailed criticism of actions and attitudes undermining journalism's historic responsibilities in the United States. Since the heyday of Watergate, being adversarial has become *de rigueur* to the point where both public figures and the press are increasingly viewed with nose-holding contempt.

"In denigrating politicians before the fact, before we have reason, we are denigrating our own mission—and, inevitably, ourselves," Reeves states. "The mission is vigilance and understanding. Part of the mission is to understand where our power ends.... There is courage and honor in standing against the wind of calculated public opinion and checking out the emperor's wardrobe. But wisdom is knowing when to shout and when to study, and understanding the difference between what we can do and what we cannot do."

Acknowledging current problems and those looming on the multimedia horizon, Reeves advocates a back-to-the-future approach, a return to fundamental principles of probing reportage about the strengths and shortcomings of our political life. A nay-saying press ultimately loses its voice of authority—and the respect of the public. □

Robert Schmuhl *is professor of American studies and director of the Program in Journalism, Ethics & Democracy at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of* Statecraft and Stagecraft *and* Demanding Democracy.

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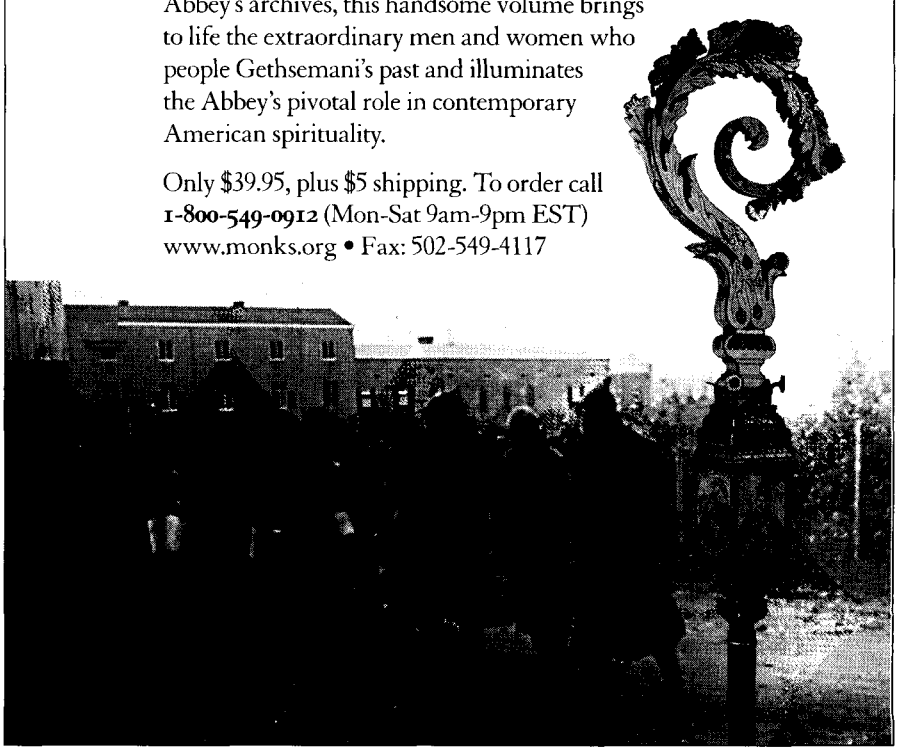

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A STRATEGY THAT PAYS

The Living Wage
Building a Fair Economy
Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce
The New Press, $22.50, 235 pp.

John Buell

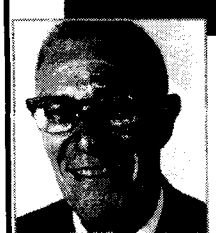
Despite the conservative political and economic tenor of the last two decades, one progressive initiative is making a comeback: Proposals to expand the number of workers eligible for and/or to increase the minimum wage are on the table not only in Washington but in many localities. Not surprisingly, however, even modest enhancements of minimum-wage law evoke fierce conservative counterattack. Last spring, *Washington Post* columnist James Glassman intoned: "All else being equal, if you raise the price of something (for instance, labor), then the demand for it (for instance, by employers) will decline. That's not just a theory; it's a law."

Two respected social scientists, economist Robert Pollin and sociologist Stephanie Luce, address these long-standing conservative arguments in this short, accessible book. Partisans on both sides can benefit from their analysis. Pollin and Luce put forth at least eight good reasons why federal and state policy makers should consider an increase in the minimum wage:

1. History justifies an increase. Historically, the seeds of future stagnation have been laid when corporations and markets were permitted to exercise total control over workers' wages. The 1880s and 1920s are examples of eras of corporate hegemony that soon brought on economic woe. More important, the now much-lamented era when unions and governments placed a floor under wages (ca. 1945–70) saw the nation's fastest and most prolonged period of economic growth.

2. Corporations can afford the increase. Even after the recent federal boost in the minimum wage to $5.15, today's jobs pay 30 percent less in real, inflation-adjusted dollars than they did thirty years ago. It is important to remember that if the minimum wage had increased as fast as worker-productivity gains have in the last thirty years, it would now stand at over $11 an hour. Pollin and Luce also show that municipal minimum-wage ordinances, which compel recipients of city contracts to pay all workers a "living wage," defined as between $6.50 and $7.50 an hour, have amounted to little more than 1 percent of total production costs for most contractors. Firms have been able to absorb most of the costs, through further

Rethinking Welfare



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Robert M. Solow
Edited by Amy Gutmann

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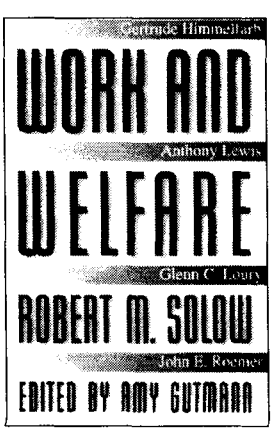

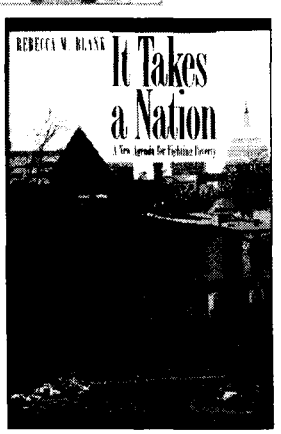

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productivity improvements or simply by accepting lower profit rates. Jobs have not been lost.

3. Many jobs at or just above the minimum wage are in the service sector and cannot easily be relocated out of the country. Two of my home state's neighbors, Vermont and Massachusetts, have recognized that the current federal minimum wage is too low. They have already set higher state levels, and it is hard to detect any business flight.

4. Workers aren't just raw material. How workers are treated has a major impact on their job performance. Pollin and Luce note several examples of firms that pay $7.25 an hour to their lowest-level workers and yet compete successfully with firms paying far less. "The key to their competitive success," they suggest, "was a high morale/high productivity work environment, which included almost no absenteeism or turnover." When workers are treated with respect, their self-esteem and willingness to contribute both on the job and in their communities is enhanced.

5. Workers are also consumers. Our current economic growth is heavily dependent on consumer confidence (and debt!). That cannot continue forever. Only if we raise those on the bottom of the income ladder will we be able to put economic advance on a sounder foundation.

6. Society neither can nor should allow working Americans to persist in hunger or deprivation. Recent changes in welfare law were premised on the popular assumption that if one works hard, one can escape poverty. Maine is one of the few states where this assumption has received careful scrutiny. Stephanie Seguino and Sandy Butler, of The Maine Center for Economic Policy, have studied poor women. Their findings indicate that many of those leaving welfare for the job market receive below-poverty-level wages. Such workers will continue to need assistance, either in the form of private charity, restored welfare, or increases in the earned-income tax credit.

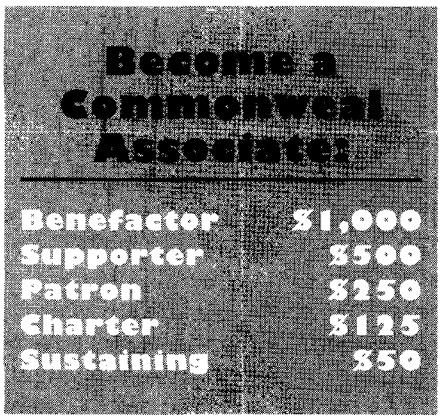
7. The earned-income tax credit is good public policy because it creates an incentive to work and is broad based without intruding unduly in the lives of recipients. Nonetheless, even this tax credit is an implicit subsidy to businesses whose strategy is to pursue a low-pay, high-turnover work force. Although such a strategy may work for business in the short run, it imposes severe costs on the rest of us.

8. Alleviating urban poverty requires some economic-development policy. Recognizing that need should not result in writing business a blank check. State and local subsidies to businesses in urban areas usually require no *quid pro quo* and often fail to produce lasting job growth. States would be far better off emphasizing adequate transportation and education for workers than direct subsidies to business.

Catholic social thought has long maintained that the worker is a vital part of the community and merits a living wage. Pollin and Luce demonstrate that modest boosts in the minimum wage, especially during a booming economy, can leverage greater worker productivity and continuing consumer demand. The hyperbole of business groups to the contrary, such minimum wage policies do not constitute micromanagement. They merely encourage business to compete in areas other than the race to the bottom when it comes to worker wages.

Pollin and Luce do not regard the minimum wage as a panacea. Modest increases in wage levels are both possible and necessary, but we can best afford increases if productivity is expanding and extreme inequalities within the workplace curbed. Toward these ends the authors advocate both broader protections for union organizing in the workplace and restrictions on the speculative financial markets that encourage short-term management thinking. Of course, such reforms are still a good way off, but that is all the more reason to attend to local struggles over minimum-wage ordinances. Properly framed, campaigns for a living wage are popular, can achieve impressive benefits, and demonstrate how limits on market excesses work to the long-term advantage of everyone. □

John Buell *is the author of* Democracy by Other Means *(University of Illinois).*



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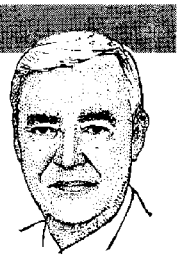


Lawrence S. Cunningham

Karl Rahner complained that Christians profess a trinitarian faith in their creed and liturgy but live as if they were pure monotheists. Part of this problem derives, Rahner thought, from the overly speculative treatment the Trinity received at the hands of theologians. Since Rahner wrote that critique there has been a veritable flood of books reconsidering the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of the Christian mystery. These books have come from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Reformed theologians. Indeed, most advanced theological courses and seminars now begin with the Trinity in their *ordo doctrinae* and not in the more philosophically rooted doctrine of the One God.

The Trinity and Paschal Mystery
by Ann Hunt
Liturgical Press/Glazier, $19.95, 198 pp.

Hunt's book is a close look at four theologians who have begun their theological reflections on the Trinity with a consideration of the Paschal Mystery: the passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each of these theologians focuses on a different aspect of this mystery. F.X. Durrwell, an Alsatian Redemptorist, begins with Christ's Resurrection. Ghislain Lafont, a French Benedictine, starts with the death of Christ. Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Swiss polymath, is famous for his aesthetic meditation on Christ's descent into hell. Finally, the provocative English Benedictine, Sebastian Moore, presents a psychological reconstruction of what it meant for the disciples to grasp in faith the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. Hunt judges each theologian's fidelity to the biblical message, appropriation of the theological tradition, and methodology. Though all root their reflections in the Paschal Mystery, each gives distinct and nuanced interpretations of this central Christian event. What all of these theologians have in common is their unwillingness to consider the biblical material as "empirical residue" (she borrows the term from Bernard Lonergan), yet each judges the biblical material the necessary starting point for any serious trinitarian theology. Hunt is quite good at the difficult task of summarizing the views of these theologians, especially those of the ever prolix von Balthasar.

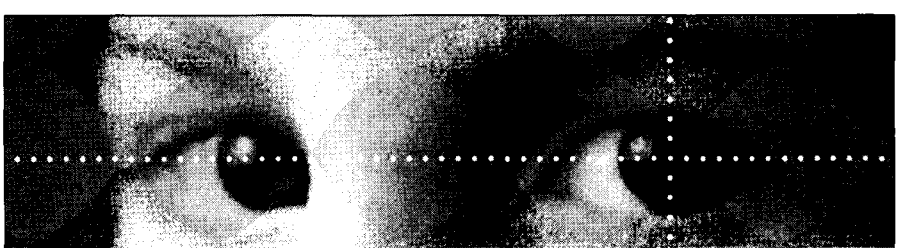
Hunt passes judgment on these thinkers after differentiating their work according to categories set out by Bernard Lonergan. She sees each coming to grips with a culture in which the older theological terminology and philosophical presuppositions seem attenuated. She further notes that their somewhat idiosyncratic efforts toward articulating a postmodern construction of things are similar to certain Reformed and Orthodox writers.

Hunt's book is not for the theologically timid. Those who have a broad theological culture, however, will find this a cogent, well-written work. I recommend it for serious students of theology.

Tertullian (A.D. 160–225) coined the word *Trinitas* (in his treatise against Praxeas) to describe the triune character of the Godhead. He was a brilliant master of rhetoric, a profoundly original thinker, a fierce moralist, and a devastating polemicist. He loved paradoxes as well as the seeming contradictions of the Christian faith. At a time of persecution he held the Cross as a standard, fiercely defended the Rule of Faith, and, in the judgment of Eric Osborn, was a more original thinker than Augustine, that other great Roman African.

Tertullian: First Theologian of the West
by Eric Osborn
Cambridge University Press, $59.50, 285 pp.

Osborn's book is not a biography (for



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that we must still rely on Timothy Barnes's classic 1981 study), but a close examination of Tertullian's theology. Armed with a mastery of both the Tertullian corpus and the secondary literature, Osborn is not shy about expressing his own judgments. He agrees with Barnes that Tertullian was probably not a lawyer. He argues, against the conventional wisdom, that Tertullian never left the Catholic church even though he was very much attracted to the Montanist New Prophecy. He brilliantly defends Tertullian's biting polemical style by showing how satire, scorn, and laughter were rhetorical *topoi* widely used in his day. Where Tertullian is wrong, Osborn says so, and where his philosophical background (in Stoicism) colors his theology, Osborn shows us. This book has some especially good chapters on Tertullian's rejection of Marcion's desire to separate the Old and New Testaments while restricting even the latter to a truncated version of Luke.

Osborn organizes his chapters around the twin themes of the strife of opposites (Tertullian has a debt to Heraclitus) and perfection in Christ, since it was a cardinal principle for him that what God made, God remade in Christ. Like his younger contemporary, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian had a comprehensive doctrine of all things being recapitulated in Christ.

This highly readable and comprehensive work is a model of how historical theology should be done.

Dominic of Sora (d. 1032) is a minor figure in church history. Born in Foligno, he entered the monastic life, trained on Mount Subasio in Umbria (where much later Francis of Assisi would keep a hermitage), and spent the rest of his life wandering through central Italy as a founder of monasteries, a sometime hermit, preacher in parishes, and reformer of the clergy. Howe, in this highly technical work of medieval history, untangles Dominic's life to demonstrate how a charismatic religious reformer of the eleventh century worked at a level beneath that of popes, emperors, and learned canonists. The casual reader should not be put off by the long footnotes or the somewhat tedious disentangling of patrons and their families; in the midst of these technicalities, there is much to be learned.

Church Reform & Social Change: Dominic of Sora and His Patrons
by John Howe
University of Pennsylvania Press, $37.50, 220 pp.

Medievalists will pass judgment on the reliability of Howe's research (I am a consumer of this scholarship, not a producer!). Those interested in medieval history in general will be instructed by a number of Howe's observations. First, there is a fine discussion of the role of hermits in early medieval reform. Second, these hermits served an important social function: they attracted people; they provided hospitality for the traveler; they developed economically marginal land; and they provided models of sanctity.

I was most impressed by Howe's ar-

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gument about the wide understanding the early medieval monks had of the Rule of Benedict. His thesis, held by others, is that these early monastics formed "textual communities" (the phrase is Brian Stock's) which felt no need to follow Benedict's Rule *ad litteram* (Benedict probably did not mean his own "little rule for beginners" to be so observed). I can only lament that Howe was unable to reconstruct what Dominic's horarium was like. These monastic communities evidently developed their own customs as need and circumstance arose.

Dominic's houses are now mostly gone, absorbed by other orders, left in the backwaters of Italian ecclesiastical life with the rise of the Cistercians and the great abbeys like Monte Cassino. What remains are the memories of Dominic in some of the hill towns of central Italy and some curious devotional practices involving the draping of snakes on his statue on his feastday by local *serpari*. They may be enacting, Howe indicates, memories of when the people of the Marsican area of Italy in ancient Roman times were renowned for their snake-handling abilities. Who knows if this quaint practice (also known in Sicily) goes back far in history, since the practice can only be traced to the seventeenth century.

Howe's study will be of most interest to serious students of medieval history. Amateurs will benefit from reading it if they have any interest in how different ages have struggled to reform the church.

I have a soft spot in my heart for Malcolm Muggeridge (1903–90) because he once said something nice about my first book—in *Esquire*, of all places. The book was about Saint Francis of Assisi. Beyond that episode, what I knew of him was that he wrote the book, based on a television documentary, that vaulted Mother Teresa to international celebrity; that he appeared on William F. Buckley's "Firing Line" to excoriate the contemporary world and its vices; that he converted to the Roman Catholic church in his dotage; and that somewhere in my distant past I gave a positive review to the collected essays he published under the title *Jesus Rediscovered*.

Malcolm Muggeridge: A Biography
by Gregory Wolfe
Eerdmans, $35, 462 pp.

It was only through a reading of Wolfe's sympathetic biography that I have learned the details of Muggeridge's peripatetic, messy, and varied life. To his everlasting credit, while a journalist in Moscow in the thirties, Muggeridge exposed Stalin's genocide in the brutal attempt to collectivize agriculture in the Ukraine. Trendy Leftists of the day turned a stone face against his reportage. Like many of his contemporaries, he served in British intelligence during the war. Subsequently, he became editor of *Punch* and a "talking head" on BBC radio and television. During all of these various adventures, he was a persistent philanderer (as was his wife Kitty). Wolfe duly catalogues his many affairs.

What I did not known was that Muggeridge, with his searching mind and errant moral life, was haunted by religious questions from his earliest days. He was kept from total disaster by his long friendship with the Anglican theologian-priest Alec Vidler. During the war years he was so despondent that he even made a desultory attempt at suicide. Wolfe is quite good in keeping Muggeridge's religious quest a constant theme amid the somewhat tedious accounts of travels, financial woes, free-lance writing, reporting, and editorial assignments. Indeed, Muggeridge's spiritual quest is the most compelling part of this book.

Those religious instincts found expression in his documentaries on Mother Teresa and Saint Paul, as well as in his keen interest in the writings of Augustine, Pascal, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Solzhenitsyn. Muggeridge's fascination with Augustine's *Confessions* began in his young adulthood and continued throughout his life. Indeed, more than once, Wolfe describes Muggeridge's approach to Christianity as "Augustinian." Muggeridge experienced a constant battle between an active libido and a near disgust at physicality.

Wolfe's biography is a generous tribute to a person whom he clearly admires. My most serious reservation has to do with Wolfe's conviction that Muggeridge stands with G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis as England's greatest Christian apologists of the century. Wolfe sees Muggeridge as a nice counter-balance to the romanticism of Lewis and Chesterton. A good point, but a minor one. Still, Muggeridge certainly lacked Chesterton's capacity for the memorable phrase (Auden called GKC the greatest aphorist of the century). Try to think of one memorable line written by Muggeridge. Second, Muggeridge did not have the reflective character of a C. S. Lewis. Lewis's deceptively simple prose was rooted in a lifelong habit of thinking things through, in a deep level of scholarly attainment, and from a fund of personal tragedy. Finally, neither Chesterton nor Lewis ever sounded like cranky curmudgeons when they excoriated the ills of the world. Try to think of what writing by Muggeridge you would hand to a person seriously interested in the claims of Christianity. Muggeridge's life was interesting and richly varied. Wolfe gets that right. However, his claim for Muggeridge's lasting significance is a bit of a reach.

Bruce Bawer makes one central point in this book with which I am in complete agreement. He argues that certain conservatives and fundamentalists have appropriated the word "Christian" so that, in common parlance, the term has come to mean a very specific brand of Christianity. When one hears the phrase "Christian music," for example, it is Pat Boone, not Bach, that comes to mind. "Christian" has become, as it were, a code word.

Stealing Jesus:
How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity
by Bruce Bawer
Crown, $26, 340 pp.

Apart from that helpful insight, Bawer's book is very disappointing. He distinguishes, in his opening pages, "legalistic" from "nonlegalistic" Christians. Legalistic Christians are those evangelicals and fundamentalists who have strong traditional creedal and biblical

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teachings. "Nonlegalists" are liberal Protestants of various stripes who represent the once-upon-a-time "mainline." (Bawer deals mainly with Protestants; his few excursions into Roman territory are almost always wrongheaded.)

The bulk of this book is devoted to criticizing the usual suspects (Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker, Ralph Reed, James Dobson, and a whole gaggle of other televangelists, preachers, and political pundits on the right) and contrasting their pinchbacked version of things with such historic figures as the late Harry Emerson Fosdick and contemporary nonlegalists such as Marcus Borg (of Jesus Seminar fame) and, God help us, the ever fatuous Bishop John Shelby Spong. Bawer is also partial to the later work of Hans Küng, who seems to be the only Catholic theologian he knows.

Bawer deals with a subject that has been treated too many times and, in some instances, by people who have the wit to ask why such religiosity shows such staying power. Bawer plows along chronicling the dim theories of Charles Dobson, Frank Peretti, Pat Robertson, *et al*. Such a picture of a good-and-evil religious universe allows Bawer to sympathize with the blasphemous ACT UP disruption of Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral while being scandalized at some rough language used by Christian Coalition members at the 1992 Republican Convention.

The tendentious nature of this book was all the more disappointing to me because I have read Bawer's literary criticism in the *New Criterion* with great profit. This present work, born, I suspect, from the perceived rough treatment gays receive in "legalistic" church circles, is too angry, too polemical, and too one-sided to be taken seriously. The author's snobbishly condescending description of worshipers in a little church in Georgia who, as he sniffs, listen to country music and don't read books, might have given the whole thing away: why can't they be liberal, educated, tolerant, and socially conscious just like Bruce Bawer? □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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(Continued from page 4)

Such was not the case with Hitler, nor is it with Milosevic, with the engineers of ethnic cleansing. They take pride in the brutal dehumanization and slaughter to which they subject those they declare to be "enemies." And, by not drawing that line in the sand—by not taking action when Hitler invaded the Sudetenland, when Milosevic attacked Croatia, when the barbaric Serbian onslaught upon the Bosnians began—we turned millions of other people's other cheeks. Christ on the cross suffered himself. He asked his followers to turn the other cheek, but he never compelled them to, nor did he sit back clothed in moral superiority as they suffered when he withdrew his help.

Obviously I accept the concept of a just war. It can at least offer a hope of justice, a possibility of a principled peace. But a just war is something quite other than the "goody-now-I-get-to-shoot" view that Callahan's general seems to think it is. If he really understood what constitutes a just war, Barry McCaffery would not, for instance, have accepted leadership of the war on drugs, for there is no way such a war can be won, and a reasonable chance of success is one of the more obvious criteria of a just war. When we consider sowing Colombian drug fields with poison so strong that it will render the land infertile for God knows how long, we turn other people's other cheeks with a vengeance.

Of course, the worst policy of all is one that combines a bit of nonviolence with a soupçon of sloppily reasoned just-war theory. Witness the safe havens in Bosnia, a plan which turned not only the other cheeks of Muslim refugees but those as well of 850 hapless Dutch soldiers who were sent as UN "peacekeepers" to protect Srebrenica with not much more than pious hopes and slingshots.

God grant us the understanding to assess circumstances realistically, the wisdom to judge the relationship between means and ends, and the courage to recognize that we have not only to practice the virtues we preach but also to suffer for them.

MARIAN BURKHART
New York, N.Y.

The writer replies:

Marian Burkhart defends her belief in a just war vigorously. I wish she would give an instance of a recent war in which all the required criteria for a just war are met. If she must rely only on a just war's "hope of justice, a possibility of a principled peace," it doesn't seem enough to justify the killing.

My own challenge as a pacifist who believes in the need for an international police force and nonlethal legal coercion lies in devising how such peace-keeping actions can be effected. I am intent on the means to be used because I think Gandhi was correct when he said "means are ends in the making." A war to end wars doesn't work, any better than state terrorism to end terrorism. Surely more clever and effective nonviolent means can be devised to outwit and defeat the thugs of the world. Gene Sharp has catalogued the history of hundreds of successful nonviolent movements against powerful regimes.

I think I would have my doubts about just-war theory even if I were not a Christian. But how can Christians escape Jesus' call to love your enemies and do to others as you would have them do to you? Christians must overcome evil by good: Thou shall not kill or do evil for the sake of good. Jesus preached this nonviolent message to everyone in the sermon on the plain. Of course he never compelled anyone to turn the other cheek because he never coerced anyone to do anything; he just told us what God commands.

Finally, Marian Burkhart's faith in the English conscience is misplaced. The British in India, not to mention in their other colonies such as Ireland, did "wantonly and willfully destroy unarmed protesters, innocent civilians." And, alas, so has the United States.

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

Where's the lunacy?

Reviewing Justus George Lawler's book on Gerard Manley Hopkins [October 23], Edward T. Wheeler commends the author for "destroying the lunacies" of Hopkins biographer Robert Bernard Martin. Although I do not have any academic qualifications in literary criticism with which to challenge Wheeler's opinions about Hopkins's poetry, except as one who has found inspiration in it, I do want to challenge his attitude toward Hopkins's sexuality.

Wheeler is pleased that Lawler has "attempted a rescue" of Hopkins from Martin's view that the poet had homosexual desires and even an encounter. What would be so terrible if he did? Why would it be more terrible than the experience of a heterosexual like Thomas Merton? Even more distressing to me is Wheeler's sympathy with Lawler's "rush of pent-up energy" as he dismantles the thought of a "dark sexual side" of Hopkins. Judging by the review, both Lawler and Wheeler think homosexual orientation is evil. I see attitudinal parallels in the recent attack on a gay man in Wyoming—a violent enacting of this very "rush of pent-up energy" to eliminate the homosexual experience from our world. It's time for Catholic Christians to confront our homophobia and adopt a healthier attitude toward how God speaks through all experiences.

SUZANNE POLEN
Pittsburgh, Pa.

The reviewer replies:

Lawler's book aims at seeing Hopkins plain, that is, in context, and by avoiding any narrow vision of his work. Ms. Polen looks close and distorts—in this case, my review of the book. If she connects the phrase "dark sexual side" with a satanic condemnation, she misses the point. Martin, the biographer, argues that if Hopkins is to be seen as involved in a homoerotic encounter, the evidence for that has to be uncovered because Hopkins chose to hide it in his journal and letters. What is hidden is generally "dark." (That word, *mea culpa*, is mine, not Lawler's.)

Almost as disturbing as her misattribution (to me and Lawler) of delight in

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beating up on homosexuals in print are Polen's historical distortions involved in reading something we call a gay lifestyle back into the nineteenth century. Surely the complexities of that age need explication if we are to derive more than corroboration of contemporary anxieties. Lawler's energy (which I applaud) is focused on demolishing wildly improbable literary interpretations. These are the "lunacies" destroyed. Lawler is concerned to present Hopkins as an *anima candida* who knows Christ [who] "plays in ten thousand places/ Lovely in limbs"; Lawler's treatment of Martin is judicious and measured. Polen allows herself an easy assumption: that a forceful refutation of a "dubious theory" has to be a loss of Christian charity. The reference to the death of the Wyoming student can only underscore Polen's demonization of the experience of reading. She sees through a glass, darkly. EDWARD T. WHEELER

Rawls & Murray

Bernard G. Prusak's interview with Professor John Rawls ["Politics, Religion & the Public Good," September 25] makes a helpful contribution to current discussions about the participation of Catholics in a democratic society. Its readers should be informed that the continuities between Rawls's ideas and those of John Courtney Murray, S.J., have been illumined by Professor Leslie Griffin of Georgetown University in her article, "Good Catholics Should Be Rawlsian Liberals," *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 5 (1997).

ROBERT A. KRIEG
Notre Dame, Ind.

The writer is professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

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THE RAMP

Paul Marx

It's not easy to carry on a conversation with Jerry. Finding the right word is not his thing; finding the right wood or the right tool is. He'd much rather get on with the job than stand around picking through words.

Jerry has been doing jobs around my old house for a half-dozen years. His work is terrific. Whenever something needs fixing, he picks through all the possible ways, from materials to tools to time to methods of concealment. Usually he settles on just the right combination. Most recently, he got me through the problem of the slow-draining bathtub. "Galvanized pipe," Jerry said, "probably only a finger open for the water to get through." Getting access to the pipes through bathroom walls and kitchen ceiling was a big problem, but Jerry figured out how to do it and exposed the pipes for the plumber with minimal damage.

When, at age eighty-six, my father moved from Los Angeles to my home in New Haven, Jerry built the wall of doors that allowed us to turn the dining room into a bedroom. When my father first arrived, he had no problem getting around with his walker. But in his ninetieth year, after numerous falls, we decided to put the walker away and use a wheelchair. I called Jerry about constructing a ramp outside the back door.

The following Saturday he set to work at nine, and by three we had a first-class ramp. I've been looking at other ramps ever since and have yet to see its equal. I see ramps made of nothing more than sheets of plywood. I see ramps without the cleats that would prevent the pusher from slipping and sliding. I see ramps that are too long or too short. Jerry's, made of one-by-six planks with half-inch spaces for drainage between them, would be a sure winner in any competition.

My father died two years ago, and the ramp is still up.

Lately, I've been telling myself that the ramp is Dad's memorial. I go up and down it several times a day. And often, especially in foul weather, I have vivid images of him, hanging on, angry, or laughing, as I struggle to push him up the ramp or to hold him back going down.

I've been a single man ever since my partner decamped for New Mexico, freeing herself of the burden of having to share her home with an aged parent in need of help. But I most definitely do not like the idea of going through the rest of my life alone, without loving and being loved. So I've found myself wondering about the effect of the ramp on a female guest: "What on earth does he need a wheelchair ramp for? Is he anticipating his decline, expecting to become a cripple?" I've come close to deciding to have the ramp taken down.

Almost all the work Jerry has done for me has been on Saturdays. After the plumber did his work, Jerry was apologetic about not being able to come out on the next Saturday to start the patching up. He had promised to take his wife to Boston to visit their daughter. "She loves to do that," he said. "It'll probably be the last time, though. She's got lung cancer, and it's getting worse. She was a smoker."

Jerry became as talkative as he has ever been with me. He can't work as much as he would like. He has had to turn down kitchen jobs, because "once you start you can't stop in the middle." His wife needs him more and more, and he just doesn't know when he'll have to give up a day's work and stay home. I told Jerry that the work for me didn't necessarily have to be done on Saturday. I gave him my weekday at-home schedule and told him to come out at any of the times when I would be home.

Jerry finished up during the week before the Boston trip. As he was getting his stuff together, I asked him how much he would want to take down the wheelchair ramp. He stepped outside to have a look. Usually, Jerry is pretty quick to quote a price. But it was apparent that this was one job he didn't want.

"You know, you really shouldn't take it down," he said. "We aren't getting any younger, you and me. You never know. You might need it. If I was you, I'd leave it alone." □

"Kevin is sixty-five today, and can't be turned down."

Paul Marx *teaches in the department of English at the University of New Haven.*

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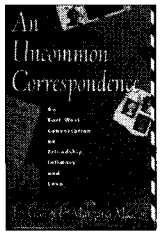

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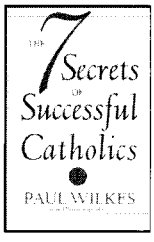

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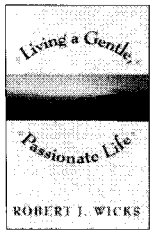

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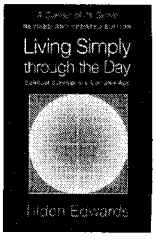

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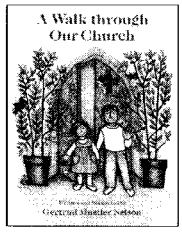

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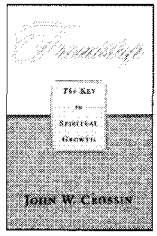

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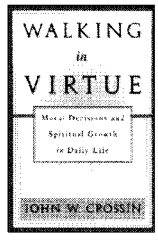

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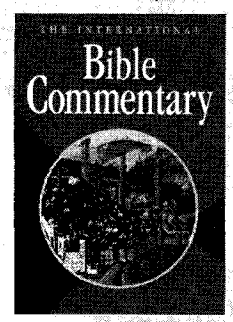

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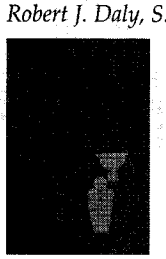

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